THE OFFICIAL GAMES MAGAZINE OF BEST BUY®

ISSUE 033 | OCTOBER 2013

@gamer

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PG. 52

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PG. 23

HANDS-ON

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ONE MAN AND HIS MOBILE PHONE...CHICAGO DOESN'T STAND A CHANCE PG. 44

Fresh Peeks at Forthcoming Games

PREVIEWS: Call of Duty: Ghosts, Super Smash Bros. PG. 16

Two Screens Are Better Than One

FEATURE: Enhanced gameplay via tablet or mobile device PG. 58

17 New Releases Tested and Scored

REVIEWS: Rayman Legends, Lost Planet 3, FIFA vs. PES PG. 65

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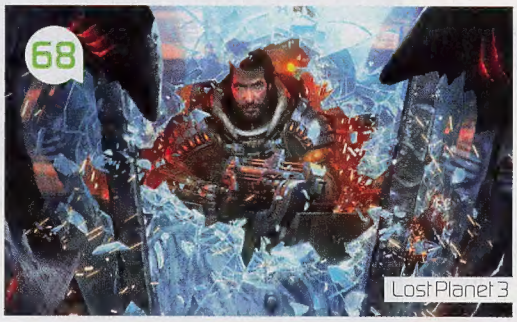

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This issue went to press before we had an opportunity to review *Grand Theft Auto V*, but you can find the review online at atgamermagazine.com/exclusive

MEET THE STAFF

Charlie Barratt
Executive Editor
Charlie's already picked his Halloween costume: Guy Frantically Catching Up On Current-Gen Games.

Nick Pino
Associate Editor
Nick doesn't like scary movies, so we helpfully suggested he try *Black Christmas* instead. Shhhh.

Jenny Esdaile
Art Director
Jenny's favorite Halloween candy are flavored Tootsie Rolls. And her favorite flavor? Vegemite.

Jillian Lungaro
Associate Art Director
Jillian is no stranger to videogame costumes. She's been Lara Croft, Jill Valentine, and a Wii Remote!

Letter from the EDITOR

WELCOME TO @GAMER

It's really exciting—well, for me, at least—that we have Ubisoft's *Watch_Dogs* on the @GAMER cover this issue. It's the game I'm most looking forward to playing this holiday season.

I get into a new *Call of Duty* or *Battlefield* or *Assassin's Creed* as much as anyone, but I really love seeing a brand-new title take its shot, especially when there's as much buzz as *Watch_Dogs* seems to have generated.

Now, I won't know for sure until I start playing the final game, but I think part of the game's allure is that protagonist Aiden Pearce isn't a muscle-bound superhero who can fly or pick up trucks, but a regular guy who can do wild things with a mobile phone. That makes him relatable. Hopefully the game is as much fun as it's seemed from previous demos.

What games are you looking forward to playing? Let us know at editor@atgamermagazine.com.

Andy Eddy
Editor-in-Chief

@GAMER XTRA
If you were reading *@GAMER*'s digital edition, you'd be able to listen to an audio message from Andy Eddy in this tag.

Staff_

@GAMER

Future

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Do you believe that there is still a problem with sexism in the gaming industry? I know it's improved, but I still think there's an issue to be honest. I would love to see more female-fronted games, not just [women] sidekicks all the time. Thank you!

—Steph P. via email

ED: Steph, this is a great—and important—question. Is sexism still a problem in the games space? Unfortunately, yes...but we've seen some positive changes recently in the way women are portrayed in games. Just look at heroes like the revamped Lara Croft and Jodie from the upcoming Beyond: Two Souls, or the ability to play as a female Commander Shepard in Mass Effect. These characters have more depth and personality than many of their male counterparts. That's the good news.

The bad news is that those examples are the exception and not the rule: Women are still too often relegated to the role of sidekick or eye candy. It's easy to feel apathetic when you're not the one being excluded, but hopefully all gamers will come to understand how important it is for us to be a united front for equality. It's not about one race/gender/sexuality getting more screen time than the next, but about everyone feeling connected to the medium.

I am always curious how people choose their career paths, so maybe you guys could share what first got you into gaming? I always played videogames as a kid, but it was the original *Zelda* on the NES that got me anticipating the upcoming games and consoles.

—Jon M. via email

ED: Talk about ourselves? We'd love to! As it turns out, the @GAMER staff represents three distinct generations of gamers. While Andy got his start around the Atari 400/800 days playing titles such as Archon, Bill Budge's Pinball Construction Set, and Murder on the Zinderneuf, Nick wouldn't pick up a controller for the first time until over a decade later with games like Super Mario 64 and General Chaos. Charlie's in the middle somewhere: He grew up with the Atari, NES, and SNES, but didn't grow truly obsessed with games—and the unique kinds of stories they can tell—until his parents bought him King's Quest V on PC. Have a cool gaming origin story you want to share? Write us!

Hey, @GAMER, do you know Taylor personally? Just wondering because you seem to think you know her!

—Spam Twitter Account

ED: Woah, woah, woah, slow your roll. Taylor and us? We're tight. Sure, we shoot pool on the weekends and hang out at the corporate shindigs together, but it ain't no thing. We go wa-a-ay back. Like, we went to Nirvana concerts together. There was this one time that Taylor and we were hanging out...well, maybe that's a story for another issue.

GAMING TRENDS, 140 CHARACTERS AT A TIME

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Get more at @GAMER

ANDY EDDY TWITTER: @VIDGAMES

I need to catch up on some d'l games—*Hotline Miami*, *FTL*, and *Kickbeat*—before the fall Triple-A flood. *Brothers* was a fantastic few hours.

CHARLIE BARRATT TWITTER: @CHARLIEBARRATT

Tweet from my future: Hey guys, finally 100%'d *GTA5*! So, what'd I mis-...wait, we elected WHO the President of Mars?!?

NICK PINO TWITTER: @PEENDADDY

Before the next-gen consoles come out, I'm going to finish *Lost Odyssey*. It's *FFX* meets *The Legend of Dragoon*—my two favorite RPGs ever.

@GAMER XTRA

If you were reading *@GAMER*'s digital edition, you'd be able to listen to our podcast right here.

BEST BUY CUSTOMER REVIEWS & RATINGS

WANT TO HAVE YOUR SAY?

What are you playing? Do you like it? Do you hate it? Let other @GAMER readers know what you think—send in a 50- to 100-word review to reviews@atgamermagazine.com, and we'll post 'em in each issue.

Submit your review to:
reviews@atgamermagazine.com

SAINTS ROW IV

Very few games in recent memory burst at the seams with the same level of humor, fanfare, and entertainment as Saints Row IV. Complete with super powers, loads of customization, and a city full of absurdly entertaining activities, this love letter to videogames and finale to the Third Street Saints saga offers a hilarious, over-the-top experience, and is worth every penny.

Score: 4.5/5

—Jordan Oscar

Welcome to 2013, where tablets and smartphones enable you to take your information anywhere. It's also where you'll find the digital version of @GAMER, which is chock full of extra content, such as screenshots and streamed game trailers. Test drive it at atgamermagazine.com or convert your subscription by clicking on the Customer Service link at the bottom of the page. We don't want you to miss a thing!

[Note: Letters may be edited for size and clarity.]

Blips...

News, rumors, and game culture deconstructed

NEWS BITES

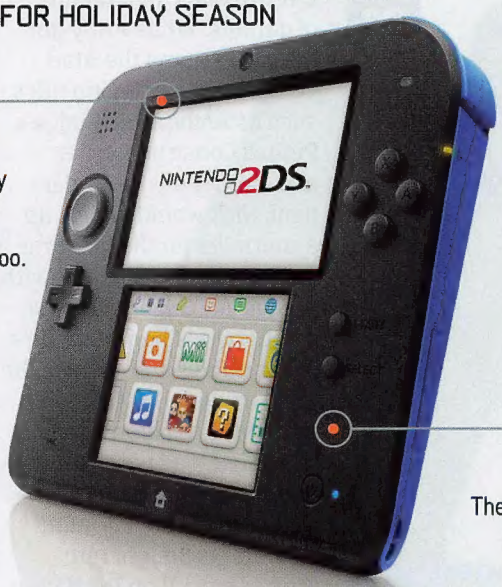
DIABLO III's first expansion, *Reaper of Souls*, is set for release in early 2014 and will feature a brand-new class called the Crusader.

DEAD ISLAND: EPIDEMIC, a recently announced multiplayer online battle arena game set in Techland's undead tropical paradise, has plans to enter beta testing in early October.

NINTENDO TAKES CONSUMERS TO A DIFFERENT DIMENSION

COMPANY SET TO RELEASE NINTENDO 2DS HARDWARE FOR HOLIDAY SEASON

LOOK MOM, NO HINGE
3D isn't the only feature that got cut—the fragile hinge is gone, too.



PRICE-DROPPED
The Nintendo 2DS will retail for a mere $129.99.

It seems like every holiday season Nintendo's got a new iteration of its popular handheld waiting in the wings to fill up shoppers' carts. This year isn't any different. Branded as the Nintendo 2DS, the latest handheld drops the potentially hazardous 3D abilities of last year's console, loses the breakable hinge, and lowers the price to a competitive $129.99.

Also on the company's October agenda is *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD* Wii U bundle that will debut at a reduced price of $299.99, and will replace the Wii U Basic Set. Wondering if the new-and-improved Wii U and accompanying *Wind Waker* re-release is worth your hard-earned holiday vacation time? Check out our review of the game on pg. 80!

THE RAPTR REPORT

What are the hottest games being played by Xbox 360 and PC gamers? Raptr.com has the answer.

WARFRAME

1	CoD: Black Ops II
2	DOTA 2
3	League of Legends
4	Rift
5	World of Warcraft
6	Minecraft
7	Final Fantasy XIV Online: A Realm Reborn NEW
8	PAYDAY 2 NEW
9	Team Fortress 2
10	Warframe
11	FIFA Soccer 13
12	Saints Row IV NEW
13	Battlefield 3
14	Counter-Strike: Global Offensive
15	Dead Rising 2 NEW

BATTLEFIELD 3

Best Buy Bonus

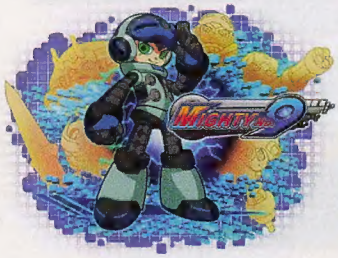
ASSASSIN'S CREED IV BLACK FLAG

Pre-order *Assassin's Creed IV Black Flag* by Oct. 29 and you'll score a free pirate-themed football while supplies last. Sure, exclusive in-game items are great, but exclusive real-life oddities are even better.

IN THE YEAR 20XX

INAFUNE TO CREATE SOUL-SUCCESSOR TO *MEGA MAN*

Keiji Inafune, creator of the Mega Man games, has taken to Kickstarter to raise money for a spiritual sequel to the original Capcom classic. In its first weekend alone, The *Mighty No. 9* raised a whopping $1 million, and has announced plans for a console release if the game can garner $2.5 million.



A WEEK TO REMEMBER

XBOX ONE AND PS4'S RELEASE DATES ONLY ONE WEEK APART

Hot on the heels of Sony's late-August announcement of a Nov. 15 release date for the PS4, Microsoft has announced the Xbox One will drop a mere one week later on Friday, Nov. 22. This is a pretty strategic move considering Black Friday falls just one week after the Xbox drops, on Nov. 29.

TELL ME A STORY

Fable: Legends to debut on the Xbox One

Announced at Gamescom, the multiplayer-centric *Fable: Legends* will be the first of the series on Microsoft's next-gen console—and the first to be made without former studio head Peter Molyneux's oversight.

GamerXTRA
The trailer for *Fable: Legends* is only in our digital edition.

FINISH THE FIGHT

CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS AND *BATTLEFIELD 4* TO OFFER STAT TRANSFER TO NEXT-GEN SYSTEMS

Next-gen holdouts now have one less reason to resist the future of consoles. Both Activision's *Call of Duty: Ghosts* and EA's *Battlefield 4* have announced programs that will transfer any stats earned on the Xbox 360 and PS3 versions of the games to their next-gen counterparts when they become available in mid-November. The one-time stat transfer is free—and those who buy an Xbox 360 copy of their games at Best Buy will receive a coupon to upgrade to the Xbox One version for just $10 with a trade-in of their previously played game.

Five Questions with...

CLAIM TO FAME...
Voice and motion actor for *Lost Planet 3*

WILLIAM WATTERSON

Professional Motion and Voice Actor

1 How did you get into motion capture?
I got very, very lucky—a good friend of mine, a sound designer, brought me on *L.A. Noire* initially just for a few days of what amounted to background work, and it turned into three months of non-stop motion capture performance and a role in the game.

2 On a scale of 1-5, 5 being silk and 1 being a bed of nails, how comfortable is a mo-cap suit?
It starts out a nice 4, maybe even 4.5, depending on how comfortable you are with your body—there are no secrets in a mo-cap suit. Then you add the sensors, helmet camera, microphone, battery pack... You really learn to appreciate jeans and a T-shirt.

3 In *LP3* you play Jim Peyton, a blue-collar miner for NEVEC. Do you have any blue-collar experience that helped you relate to Peyton?
I was a handyman at a cabinet warehouse in Portland. A line cook in Providence. A waiter in an all-night café in Dublin. A bartender in Cleveland. A set production assistant in L.A. I've painted houses, catered parties, bussed tables, washed dishes, mucked barns...there ain't much I haven't done.

4 How did working with *LP3*'s developer Spark Unlimited compare to working with *L.A. Noire*'s Team Bondi?
L.A. Noire was six days a week for three months, non-stop, around the clock. A total grind that I miss every day. *Lost Planet 3* was a couple days here [and there] over the course of a year. Totally different process. Both have their advantages, and both have given me friends for life.

5 Is it true that you were a body double for Nic Cage in *Next*?
Oh, yeah. Used to hit on Jessica Biel's body double—for obvious reasons.

@GAMER ULTIMATE

[Wheels]

What's @GAMER Ultimate? It's our place to give our feedback on the best...

What components would go into making the greatest car to ever hit the street? Well...

01 SECRET SECONDARY FIRE
Armored racing is a lot like poker: Don't show your hand until it's too late...for them.

02 MAJOR EXPLOSIVES
Borderlands taught us the importance of having more firepower than the competition.

03 UNSTOPPABLE DRIVER
Who would we pick to drive the world's best car? Franklin, duh! He can slow down time.

04 THE LATEST GADGETS
007's James Bond always had some cool spy tech, but *Spy-Hunter* had the better ride.

05 AN INTELLIGENT A.I. CORE
A human driver can only do so much in a race, but with Cortana under the hood...

06 A WHOLE LOT OF NO2
Why earn boost like in other racing games when we can just use NO2 the entire time?

07 AWESOME DRIFT TIRES
If the car's taking turns at 200 mph, we're going to need some serious drift tires.

08 PODRACER ENGINES
How much horsepower does a podracer put out? No idea, but we'd like to find out.

09 SICK NEON LIGHTING
Purely aesthetic, neon would cement our place as king of the made-up magazine cars.

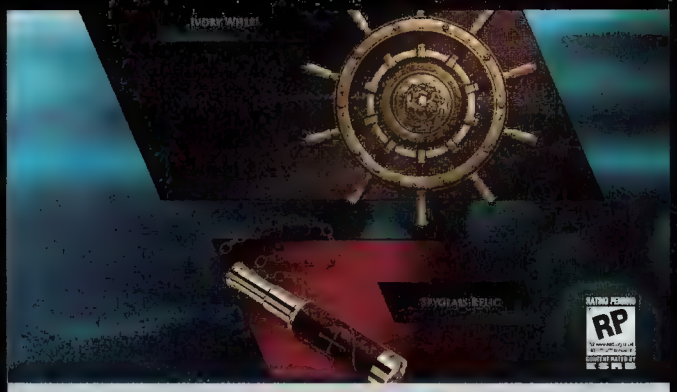
10 STRONG ARMOR PLATING
Because when have you ever heard of the Batmobile losing in a street race? Lawyered.

11 A HOMING BLUE SHELL
As much as we hated it, the nefarious blue shell was *Mario Kart*'s great equalizer.

12 ROOM FOR FRIENDS
Sure, we could've saved the world without help. But having friends there didn't hurt.

Pre-Order Exclusives

Check out these special offers on upcoming games, available by pre-ordering now!



SHADOW PACK
Pre-order Killzone™: Shadow Fall today and you'll get:
Exclusive skins for your OWL combat drone.
Epic cinematic soundtrack.
Spotlight Move to humiliate your fallen enemies in multiplayer.
Exclusive OWL Skins
Official Soundtrack
MP Spotlight Move
PRE-ORDER NOW

ASSASSIN'S CREED IV BLACK FLAG

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Release Date: Oct. 29, 2013
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U, PS4, Xbox One, PC

Those brave enough to pre-order *Assassin's Creed IV Black Flag* will uncover the Lost Treasures pack—an ivory ship wheel, spyglass relic, and rare icons in multiplayer.

KILLZONE: SHADOW FALL

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Guerrilla Games
Release Date: Nov. 15, 2013
Platforms: PS4

Be the best commander you can by pre-ordering *Killzone: Shadow Fall*. Doing so gets you exclusive OWL Combat Drone skins, a new move to use in online matches, and a download of the soundtrack.

DRIVECLUB

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Evolution Studios
Release Date: Nov. 15, 2013
Platforms: PS4

Gas up and get to your nearest Best Buy to reserve your copy of *DriveClub*. Packing a powerful supercar, livery, and level boost, the RUF RT12 R pre-order pack has everything you need to take back the streets.

NEED FOR SPEED: RIVALS

Publisher: EA
Developer: Ghost Games
Release Date: Nov. 19, 2013
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One, PC

Pre-ordering *NFS: Rivals* will net you the Ultimate Cop Pack DLC, which includes a Nissan GT-R, exclusive police car liveries, and earlier access to in-game gadgets.

Words: Andrew Hayward

Featured Game:

HELLO, HALO

The beloved shooter gets the tablet treatment

HALO: SPARTAN ASSAULT

Platforms:

$6.99, Microsoft, microsoft.com

The first Halo game to not appear on an Xbox console (not yet, at least), *Spartan Assault* is a sleek and compact top-down shooter that finds you taking the role of the titular armored soldiers across 25 missions. Despite the shift in view, the Surface tablet game looks and sounds just like console entries, with the same iconic weapons and familiar foes populating the attractive stages. *Spartan Assault* uses a pair of virtual sticks and numerous on-screen buttons to control the action, which can feel a little clumsy at times, but it's a fun spin on the franchise that you can play anywhere. And it's easily one of the best original games on the Surface.

Even familiar vehicles are here (no Warthog, sadly).

▼ No, it's not a *Tetris* spin-off...

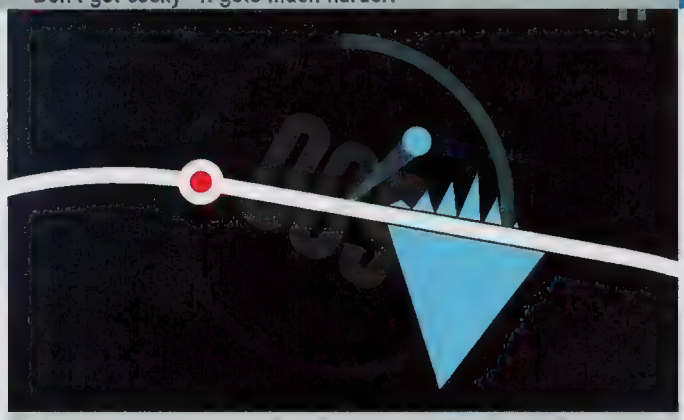
RYMDKAPSEL

Platforms:

$3.99, Grapefrukt Games, rymdkapsel.com

Don't let the ultra-minimal visuals fool you: *Rymdkapsel* packs in a lot of strategy despite the simplistic aesthetic. Put in charge of constructing and managing a space station, you'll spend your time building out the locale using *Tetris*-like pieces, but expand too much too quickly and you'll likely be unable to deal with incoming threats. Between the smart touch interface and ability to complete games in under an hour, it's a great fit for a tablet.

▼ Don't get cocky—it gets much harder.



PIVVOT

Platforms:

$2.99, Fixpoint, wtrebella.com

Like *Super Hexagon* before it, *Pivvot* is an evasion-centric affair that challenges you to avoid the myriad hazards that line your path. Left and right buttons are used to swiftly dodge the odd spikes and shapes that appear along the way, and your goal in the endless modes is to set the longest time possible before perishing. While easy to learn, *Pivvot* is designed to test your reflexes, coordination, and patience, and succeeds all around.

▼ Sneak or shoot? Shoot.

DEUS EX: THE FALL

Platforms:
$6.99, Square Enix, deusex.com

Exclusive to mobile devices, *Deus Ex: The Fall* returns you to the futuristic world seen in *Human Revolution* on consoles and computers, with a side story that finds you in the role of a cybernetically enhanced former mercenary. Like earlier affairs, *The Fall* balances stealth and gunplay with conversation and exploration, and while a bit more straightforward in design, this is still a very solid tablet taste of *Deus Ex* at a reasonable price.

▼ It's lo-fi, but totally lovely.

A RIDE INTO THE MOUNTAINS

Platforms:
$0.99, Chia-Yu & Lee-Kuo Chen, aridegame.tumblr.com

Evoking adventure classics such as *Shadow of the Colossus* and *The Legend of Zelda*, *A Ride Into the Mountains* is an indie gem that sends you on horseback in search of a faded relic. Unlike those earlier games, this retro-stylized affair centers solely on arrow-flinging action using a pull-and-release mechanic (almost like *Angry Birds*). However, the real hook comes from the stunning visual and aural design, which makes it seem seriously epic.

Play console and PC games' portable spin-offs

TRANSITIONED TO TABLET

CONSOLE TO-GO

Halo: Spartan Assault and *Deus Ex: The Fall* aren't the first tablet games to spin off from popular console or PC franchises. Here are five of the most notable earlier attempts, which may or may not have maintained the classic feel on a new platform.

01 BORDERLANDS LEGENDS HD

($6.99, 2kgames.com)
Like *Spartan Assault*, this *Borderlands* spin-off takes the form of a top-down shooter, except you control four squad members at once. It nails the look, but the approach turns frustrating in the heat of battle.

02 TOTAL WAR BATTLES: SHOGUN

($1.99, sega.com)
Shogun barely resembles the large-scale battles of the hit PC series, but retains its smarts, delivering a scaled-down real-time strategy game that looks great and plays very well on a tablet screen.

03 SKYLANDERS BATTLEGROUNDS

($6.99, activision.com)
While playable on its own, *Battlegrounds* best mimics the console games with the help of a $50 package that includes a portal and figures. Shame that the repetitive action doesn't warrant the cash, though.

04 MASS EFFECT INFILTRATOR

($4.99, ea.com)
Streamlined and focused on cover-based combat, *Infiltrator* offers tablet owners a solid slice of the epic sci-fi series. It has excellent visuals and voice acting, but also some wonky controls.

05 BATMAN: ARKHAM CITY LOCKDOWN

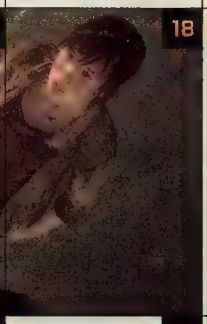
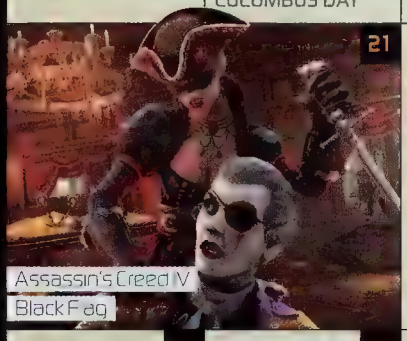
($5.99, wbgames.com)
Unlike the open-world *Arkham* epics, *Lockdown* is a straight-up brawler that tosses you into tap-and-swipe-based duels like those seen in *Infinity Blade*. Bonus costumes make it a stellar fan package.

CALENDAR

OCTOBER 2013

It's National Roller Skating Month!

▪ Game Release Date ▪ The @GAMER Podcast
↘ This day in videogame history... ↘ Hardware

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
NBA 2K14		01 ▪ NBA 2K14	02	03	04 ▪ The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD SEE PAGE 80	05 The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD
06 @GAMER ISSUE 33 ON SALE	07 ↘ 2003 Nokia puts out the N-Gage portable gaming device.	08 ▪ Beyond: Two Souls ▪ Capcom Essentials ▪ Disgaea D2: A Brighter Darkness ▪ F1 2013 ▪ Just Dance 2014	09	10	11 THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 74 	12 ▪ Pokémon X/Y
13 ▪ Skylanders Swap Force	14 COLUMBUS DAY	15 ▪ Cabela's African Adventures ▪ Wipeout: Create & Crash ▪ Worms: The Revolution Collection	16 Beyond: Two Souls	17 	18 	19
21  Assassin's Creed IV Black Flag	22 ▪ Just Dance Kids 2014 ▪ LEGO Marvel Super Heroes ▪ Rocksmith 2014 Edition ▪ SpongeBob SquarePants: Plankton's Robotic Revenge	23	24	25 ▪ Batman: Arkham Origins ▪ Batman: Arkham Origins: Blackgate THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 75	26	
27	28	29 ▪ Angry Birds Star Wars ▪ Assassin's Creed IV Black Flag ▪ Battlefield 4 ▪ Beyblade: Evolution ▪ Monster High: 13 Wishes	30	31 HALLOWEEN	ARE YOU A PRE-ORDER PRO? If you want to keep tabs on all of the pre-order specials that Best Buy and game publishers have put together, just scan this QR code with your smartphone. One webpage will tell all!	

10/22 Continued ▪ Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 10/29 Continued ▪ Pac-Man and the Ghostly Adventures ▪ WWE 2K14

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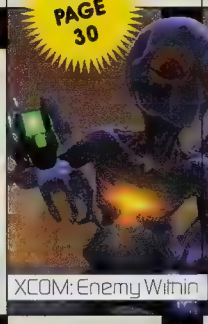
NOVEMBER 2013

It's Banana Pudding Lovers Month!

■ Game Release Date ■ The @GAMER Podcast
↘ This day in videogame history... ↘ Hardware

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
DECEMBER 2013 HIGHLIGHTS: **Donkey Kong Country Tropical Freeze:** 12/6 **Gran Turismo 6:** 12/6				SEE PAGE 16 Call of Duty: Ghosts	01 	02
03 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME ENDS @GAMER ISSUE 34 ON SALE	04 ↘ 2010 – Microsoft launches the Kinect.	05 ■ Ben 10 Omniverse 2 ■ Call of Duty: Ghosts ■ The Guided Fate Paradox ■ Zumba Fitness World Party	06 SEE PAGE 30	07 ↘ 2006 – *Gears of War* is released.	08 ■ Mario & Sonic at the Sochi 2014 Olympic Winter Games THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 76	09
10	11 VETERANS DAY	12 ■ Barbie: Dreamhouse Party ■ XCOM: Enemy Within	 XCOM: Enemy Within	14	15 ■ Deadfall Adventures ↘ PS4 LAUNCH DAY!*	16
17 [illegible] The [illegible] launches in North America at a suggested retail price of $499.99.	18	19 ■ Adventure Time: Explore the Dungeon Because I DON'T KNOW! ■ BandFuse: Rock Legends ■ Need for Speed Rivals ■ Watch_Dogs	20	21	22 ■ The Legend of Zelda: A Link Between Worlds ■ Mario Party: Island Tour ↘ XBOX ONE LAUNCH DAY!* THE @GAMER PODCAST, EPISODE 77	23 ↘ 2[illegible] Blizzard releases its first expansion pack to [illegible] one of the largest ever MMO ever made, *World of Warcraft*.
24	25 Tearaway	26 	27	28 THANKSGIVING	29 BLACK FRIDAY	30

* We'll have a full updated list of PS4 and Xbox One launch games available next issue!

11/19 Continued ■ Young Justice: Legacy ■ Zumba Kids 11/22 Continued ■ Super Mario 3D World ■ Tearaway

BATTLEFIELD 4™

GEAR UP & MOVE OUT

BATTLEFIELD 4™ RAZER TAIPAN
Beneath a Razer gaming mouse's simplistic exterior lies the result of extensive research in terms of button placement and function. This ensures that every mouse is intuitive and easy to use, while making you harder to kill.

BATTLEFIELD 4™ RAZER BLACKSHARK
Its design inspired by aviator headsets, the Razer BlackShark headset provides the same level of comfort needed to endure extended mission times and superior sound isolation for absolute command-clarity in the most frenzied situations.

R9-270X-CDFR
In the heat of battle, frame rates are as vital to gamers as their eyes and ears, and this muscular video card from XFX is the perfect upgrade to your kit to keep your real-time interactions humming, while you're pounding the enemy.

Change the face of battle.

Experience a dynamic battlefield where no two games will ever be the same. Blow the foundations of a dam and flood the area of combat. Bump into a vehicle and its alarm will give away your position. Cut the power to a building and envelope the enemy in a cloak of darkness. Your actions physically change the battlefield in real-time, providing interactive game environments that react to your every move.

The freedom to do more and be more.

Immerse yourself in the glorious chaos of all-out war. New maps, more vehicles, more weapons, and more destruction allow you to create your own path and play to your strengths. Absolutely nothing compares to the sheer scale and scope of Battlefield 4™.

Take point and turn the tide.

You've pulled the trigger, now drop the bomb. Commander Mode puts you at the heart of the situation room, letting you deliver critical intelligence, manage support activity and deploy powerful war assets during true squad-based team play. From the edge of your seat, or on the go with your tablet, Commander Mode allows you to control the battlefield like never before.

Own the land, the air and the sea.

You've led an assault from the controls of a tank. You've claimed air superiority from the cockpit of a jet. And now, Battlefield 4™ extends the front past the shoreline with the addition of intense and dramatic water-based combat. Pilot attack boats, RHIBs, and jet skis on swelling seas and stormy oceans.

Own More, Be More

Become a Battlefield 4 Premium member. Early access to themed digital expansion packs, new weekly content and exclusive personalization options at a great value.

Battlefield 4 Premium membership includes:

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- Two-weeks early access to all expansion packs for that competitive edge
- Exclusive personalization options including camos, paints, emblems, dogtags and more
- Priority position in server queues
- New weekly content and challenges
- 12 bonus Battlefield 4 Battlepacks

DICE™ EA™

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Never miss a key in the dark with individually backlit keys that give you the tactical edge, allowing you to launch assaults and flank your foes even under low light conditions.

BATTLEFIELD 4™ CONTROLLER

Trusted by pro gamers to give them an edge in any competition, this controller is built from the ground up using their feedback.

CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS

Staying on top by starting from the bottom

• Words: Charlie Barratt

▼ Customize your soldier's appearance: masks, camo, and even gender are options.

When you release a *Call of Duty* game every single year for nearly a decade, how do you convince both fans and skeptics that the latest entry in the very familiar franchise is not just "different," but really, truly, honestly, no-seriously-you-guys *different*?

Destroying America is a fascinating way to start. Infinity Ward's wiping the slate completely clean for *Ghosts*—the story and characters are all new, but more symbolically, so is the setting of a United States reduced to third-world rubble. The global superpowers have always been treated like superheroes in *Call of Duty*'s universe, so playing as downtrodden survivalist underdogs (and actual dogs; see below) instantly changes the tone of the series.

Rest assured, however, that you won't mistake *Ghosts* for a first-person *The Last of Us*. In classic *Call of Duty* fashion, the missions remain extremely diverse and visceral rollercoaster rides. So far I've seen: a squad rappel down, zip-line across, and breach through Venezuelan skyscrapers as next-gen fireworks lit up the night sky; a group of deep-sea divers dodge sharks and trade slow-mo bullets in an underwater shootout; and a pair of brothers sneak through the post-apocalyptic wasteland formerly known as San Diego, directing their controllable canine sidekick to distract enemies...or rip their throats out.

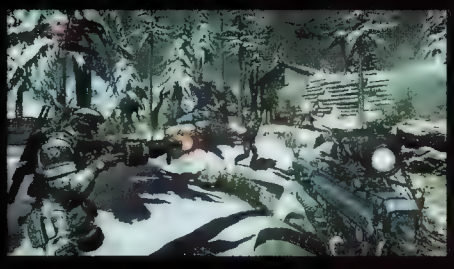
While the multiplayer portion of the game's undergoing more of an upgrade than upheaval, it's still one of the larger evolutions we've seen in *Call of Duty* history. Of course there are new modes (including a *Crank*-inspired match where you must kill someone every few seconds to stay alive) and new maps (which now include dynamic, destructible elements à la *Battlefield*), but it's the subtler additions—such as an option for female soldiers or the ability to knee slide and lean around corners during battle—that could end up having the biggest impact on how the game feels and on how you play.

Because seriously, you guys, this time *is* different.

INFINITY WARD'S WIPING THE SLATE COMPLETELY CLEAN

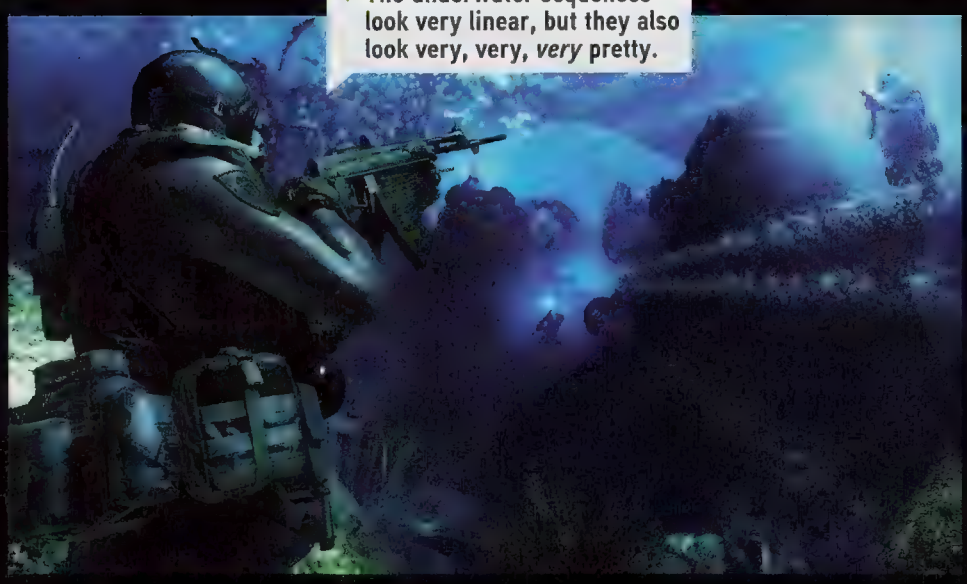
DIY DUTY Customize your soldier, then customize your squad

Until now, customization in *Call of Duty* was limited to building a class and—if you were feeling fancy—crafting your own emblem. With *Ghosts*, however, you can choose your soldier's physical appearance from over 20,000 possible combinations. The new Squads modes also give you the opportunity to create multiple soldiers (up to 10, each with its own loadout and prestige level), assemble them into teams, and pit them against other players' squads online, or against bots offline.

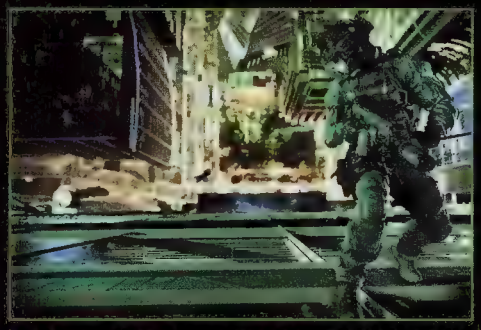


▲ Just how dynamic are the maps? This one includes a destructible snowman!

▲ **CHANGE THE WORLD** Multiplayer maps in *Ghosts* will transform as you battle on them. You can destroy cover with explosives—sometimes killing the person behind it, and sometimes revealing a hidden reward—but more dramatically, some maps include unique environmental events like a gas station collapsing or a truckload of lumber rolling across the ground. The best might be Strikezone, which goes from baseball stadium to barely recognizable ruin after a missile strike partway through the match.



▼ The underwater sequences look very linear, but they also look very, very, *very* pretty.



▲ Seems like a long way down? Wait until you're playing in outer space...

▲ America may be weak, but America's ex-special forces can still get the job done.

**UNLEASHED ** Yes, one of the main playable chararters in *Call of Duty: Ghosts* is a dog. But, no, this isn't (quite) as silly as it sounds. Although it's hard to believe that the game's human heroes could really control their furry sidekick through a futuristic tablet device, it's hard to complain when the dog is licking so much enemy tail. He can attack, he can distract, he can alert, and in the most recent trailer, he's even shown pulling a guy out of a helicopter with his teeth. In midair!

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii U
PS4 XBOX ONE PC

GAME DETAILS

HANDS-ON

CALL OF DUTY: GHOSTS

INFO
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Infinity Ward
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U, PS4, Xbox One, PC

RELEASE DATE
Nov. 5, 2013 (PS4: Nov. 15, Xbox One: Nov. 22)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 16-player competitive, 6-player cooperative

GENRE
First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR
Fans craving a new—but not *too* new—direction from *Call of Duty*

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

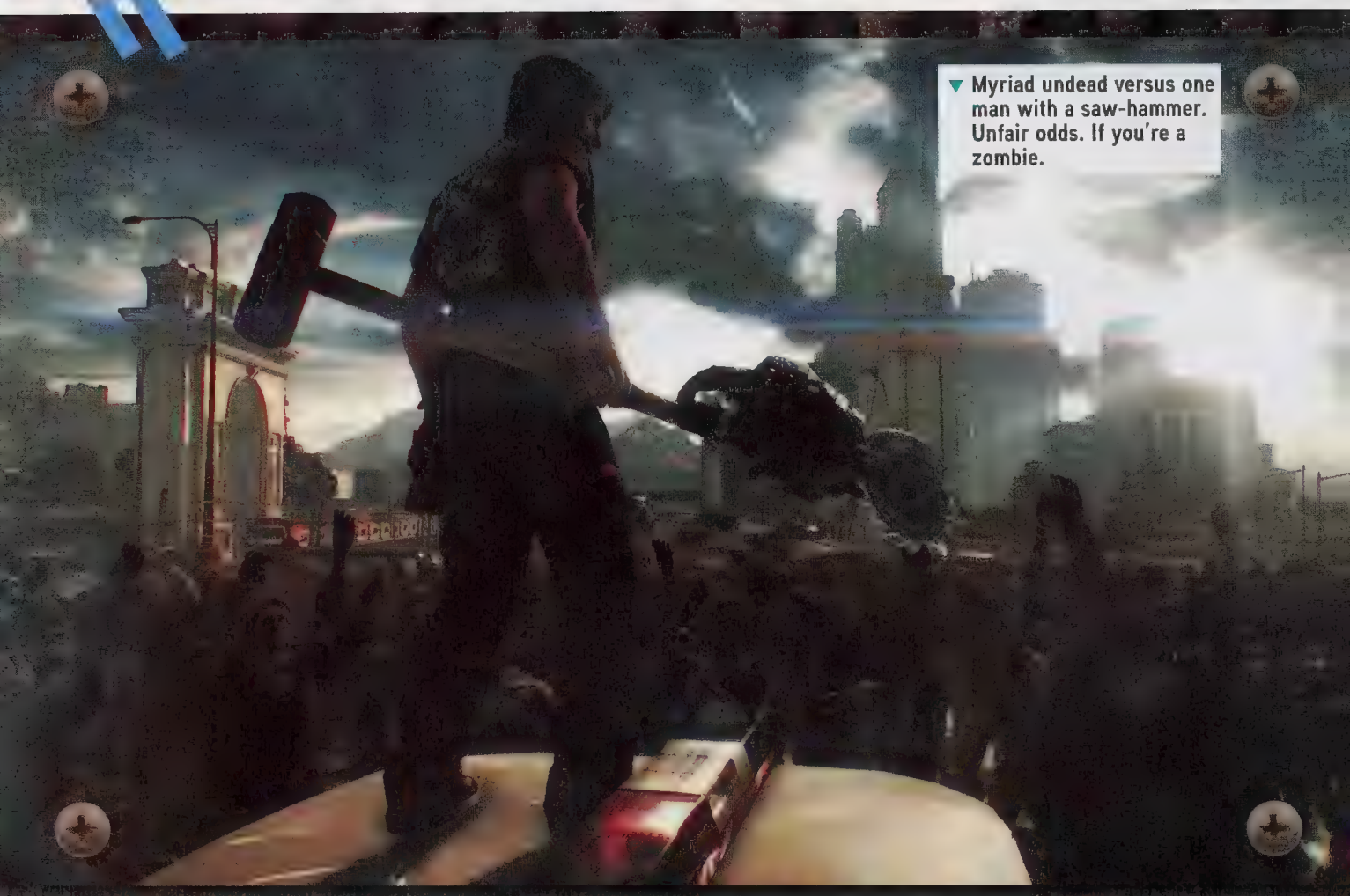
Metro: Last Light's another epic FPS about survivors fighting back from the ashes.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Call of Duty: Ghosts*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Love you, Soap and Woods, but a new *Call of Duty* story is overdue
- ❤ Major evolutions to multiplayer
- ❤ You know you want to play as that dog

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Next-gen power obvious in the campaign, but less so in multiplayer



▼ Myriad undead versus one man with a saw-hammer. Unfair odds. If you're a zombie.

DEAD RISING 3

A very silly apocalypse indeed · Words: David Houghton

It's rare that an undead apocalypse can be judged as dull, but that was the fear after *Dead Rising 3*'s reveal. Gray and grim, the game looked like a departure from the series' cartoonish, costumed take on zombie mincing.

Capcom's plan was to use the more muted unveiling to—ironically—grab more attention than a predictable showing would have scored, and it worked. But in truth, *Dead Rising 3* looks funnier, gorier, and more gloriously, air-punchingly ludicrous than any game in the franchise thus far. Breathe a sigh of relief: With a vast, seamless open world to play with, Capcom Vancouver has cranked up the cadaver-disposal action in shamelessly showboating fashion, creating a shambler-slaying simulator worthy of George Romero's wildest dreams.

While you can still glue dozens of objects together to create deliciously creative combo weapons (my current favorite is a motorized set of boxing gloves that facilitates Ryu's dragon punch from *Street Fighter*), the new draw is combo vehicles. Created in seconds provided you have the spare parts (protagonist Nick is a mechanic), these pieces of epic engineering can splatter a hundred zombies in three different ways while barrelling through the horde at breakneck speed. Why crush the undead with a steamroller when you can weld the roller to a Harley and then add a couple of flamethrowers for good measure?

LOOKS FUNNIER, GORIER, AND MORE LUDICROUS

And you'll need every weapon of mad destruction you can muster, because the stakes in *Dead Rising 3* have gone through the roof. Even for a *Dead Rising* game, the mob sizes are staggering, and the zombies are far more aggressive. With no more loading screens between areas to exploit, you'll find no sanctuary in shop doorways here...just 200 brain-aficionados smashing through the window to trap you inside. Better get the wrist-mounted machine guns ready.

▼ Soft zombies. Cold, hard metal. This was only going to end one way.

TWISTED METAL \\

This monstrous truck of death is typical of *DR3*'s combo vehicle excesses. Blades on the sides? Check. Front-mounted skewer? Check. Fireworks-equipped wheels and back-mounted rocket launchers? Check, check, check. You couldn't fail to amass a stupendous body count, even if you tried to play as a pacifist.

▼ YOU ALMOST PITY THEM. *ALMOST...* \\

▲ There's great variety among the undead, including zombie-cops with shotguns.

▲ The lack of area loads means you can take vehicles into buildings. And out.

▲ Disappointingly traditional approach here. No bear suit? No chainsaw unicycle?

FRIENDS WITH BENEFITS \\

Survivors are more asset than hindrance this time. Once rescued, you can call upon their help at any time. What's more, they all have combat and survival stats tailored to different situations, lending the game a slight RPG vibe. There are also special survivor missions that only become available via a SmartGlass app, with calls to your real-life phone or tablet.

GAME DETAILS

DEAD RISING 3

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft Studios
Developer: Capcom Vancouver
Platforms: Xbox One

RELEASE DATE
November 22, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 2-player cooperative online

GENRE
Action-horror

SUITABLE FOR
Mechanical engineering students with insatiable bloodlust

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!
Crackdown 2 is packed with gleefully ridiculous open-world action. And it has zombies

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Dead Rising 3*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Insane scope for comedy corpse killing
- ❤ Evokes the massive scale of a global zombie epidemic

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Xbox One exclusive means some franchise fans will miss out
- ✖ You need SmartGlass to get the whole game

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While we might not be able to help you save 2034 Moscow in *Metro: Last Light*, we can help you save a bit of cash when you pick up some of the latest games from Best Buy. This month we've got coupons for brand new games like *Army of Two The Devil's Cartel* and *Metro*, a few older-but-still-awesome titles like *Prototype 2* and *007 Legends*, and great gear, like the Turtle Beach PX51 Wireless Headset.

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01 ESPN SPORTS CONNECTION

Step up to the plate, step on the court, or step onto the field and play your favorite games like never before. Designed to take advantage of the Wii U, *ESPN Sports Connection* lets you experience the field in a brand-new way. Are you ready to play?

02 JAMES BOND 007 LEGENDS

The guns, the gadgets, the nefarious villains, the women and, of course, the martinis. It's time to put on the tux, grab the latest gadgets, and load up your Walther PPK as you become the world's most iconic spy in *James Bond 007 Legends*.

03 PROTOTYPE 2

Become the ultimate bioweapon. Cut through the wastelands of New York Zero and build a genetic arsenal of abilities on your quest to murder your maker, Alex Mercer. The virus may have left the city in ruins, but that won't stop you from achieving your goal.

04 METRO: LAST LIGHT

Go beneath the surface to save humanity from complete annihilation. Burdened by guilt and driven by hope, you take on the role of Artyom—mankind's last hope for survival. You hold the key to our survival, and in our darkest hour, you are the Last Light.

05 ARMY OF TWO THE DEVIL'S CARTEL

The air reeks of corruption. Anarchy reigns supreme. Clenched in the grip of a vile drug cartel, the Mexican nation languishes, torn apart by war. But the drug lords are about to get their due, delivered by the barrel of a gun. This is *Army of Two*.

06 ANY PRE-OWNED GAME $29.99 OR ABOVE

There are hundreds of pre-owned titles to choose from and to which you can apply this $10-off coupon. Take on the trials of an alien world in *Pikmin 3* for just $29.99, or protect the one you love in *The Last of Us* for only $39.99 after the discount.

07 EAR FORCE PX51 WIRELESS HEADSET

With features like the Sonic Lens and Sound Field Expander, the Turtle Beach PX51 wireless headset is designed to deliver an immersive audio experience that will have you forgetting that you're sitting in your living room and not out on the battlefield.

08 WIRELESS STEREO HEADSET

Mobilize your squad during intense gaming sessions and strategize with your teammates with Sony's Wireless Stereo Headset. With easy-access controls and a retractable microphone, it's never been easier to enjoy high-fidelity sound.

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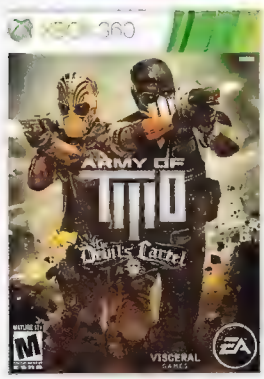

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▼ Plumber vs. swordsman vs. bounty hunter vs. puffball. Who will emerge victorious?

SUPER SMASH BROS.
FOR Wii U / 3DS

Another all-star Nintendo extravaganza

· Words: Chris Hoffman

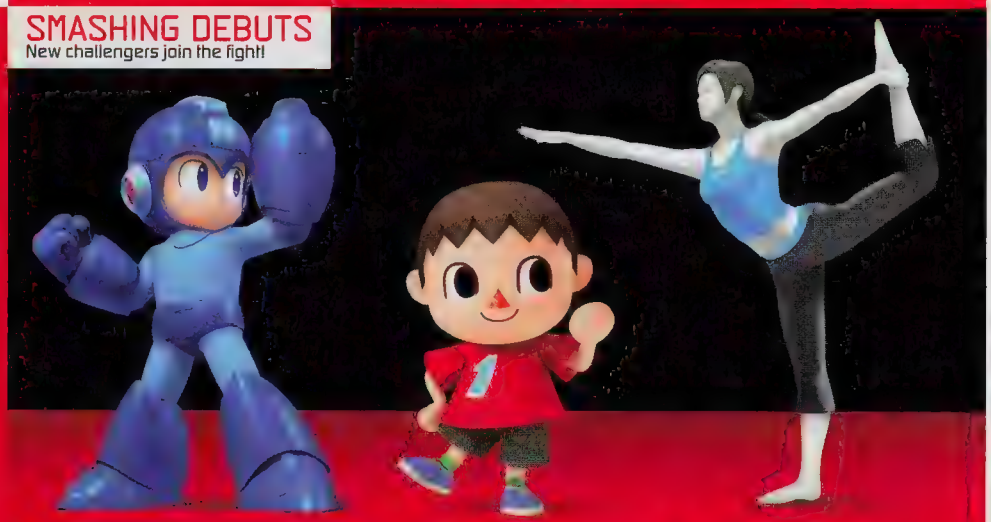
If there's one thing better than a game starring a top-tier Nintendo hero, it's a game starring a whole bunch of top-tier Nintendo heroes. And as the Big N has proven with the previous three installments of its wildly popular *Super Smash Bros.* series, there's nothing quite as fun as bringing those heroes together and then watching them beat the heck out of each other in a wild multiplayer fight to the finish.

The latest iteration of *Super Smash Bros.*—which is coming to both Wii U and Nintendo 3DS—is once again packed end to end with plentiful Nintendo fan service. The roster boasts some of the biggest names in gaming, including returning fighters like Mario, Luigi, Link, Donkey Kong, Samus, Pikachu, Pit, and Captain Olimar, and they look better than ever. Characters have been updated to match their most recent appearances (Link now wears his *Skyward Sword* attire) and their move sets are enhanced—Pit can now use his Upperdash Arm and Guardian Orbitars from *Kid Icarus: Uprising*, for example. Naturally, new characters are joining the fray as well, including the *Animal Crossing* villager, the *Wii Fit Trainer*, and even Capcom's beloved Mega Man. You can look forward to numerous stages based on your favorite games, too, including *Super Mario 3D Land*, various *Zelda* titles, and *Pilotwings Resort*.

Naturally, the gameplay will also be refined. Director Masahiro Sakurai states that each character will have his or her own "unique system" to make them feel distinct, and the action will be faster than in *Super Smash Bros. Brawl*. Additionally, there will be some form of connectivity between the Wii U and 3DS versions of the game. We've only just begun to scratch the surface of this surefire hit; much more will be revealed as we get closer to the game's release next year.

PACKED END TO END WITH PLENTIFUL NINTENDO FAN SERVICE

SMASHING DEBUTS
New challengers join the fight!



▲ MEGA MAN
The blue bomber is ready for battle! In addition to his Mega Buster arm cannon and robotic dog Rush, Mega Man is equipped with a variety of weapons including the famous Metal Blade.

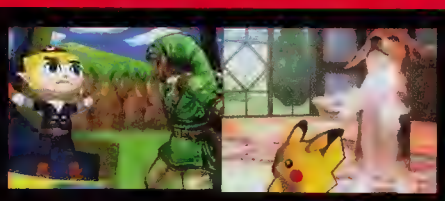
▲ ANIMAL CROSSING VILLAGER
Just like in the Animal Crossing series, the villager can use all sorts of tools, including a slingshot, an umbrella, and even a sapling. He can also grab incoming projectiles.

▲ WII FIT TRAINER
Described as "a health nut who moves with grace," the Wii Fit Trainer is a fast, agile fighter whose attacks are all inspired by exercise routines. She even provides fitness tips as she fights.

SHOW ME YOUR MOVES! \\

▲ Pikachu, I choose you! Even Bowser is no match for the mighty electric mouse.

▲ Donkey Kong isn't monkeying around. The big ape packs a powerful wallop.



PORTABLE PUMMELING \\
The 3DS version of *Super Smash Bros.* has a few notable features that separate it from its Wii U counterpart. Not only does the 3DS version include stages inspired by handheld games such as *Nintendogs* and *The Legend of Zelda: Spirit Tracks*, but it also features stylized graphics with thick outlines around the characters.

▲ Kirby and Fox duke it out, unaware of Dr. Wily's fortress looming behind them.

Wii U 3DS

GAME DETAILS

SUPER SMASH BROS.
FOR WII U / NINTENDO 3DS

INFO
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Sora, Ltd./ Namco Bandai
Platforms: Wii U, 3DS

RELEASE DATE
2014

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 4-player versus

GENRE
Fighting

SUITABLE FOR
Anybody who's ever enjoyed a Nintendo game

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!
Super Smash Bros. Brawl **is still readily available, priced at only $30, and playable on Wii U.**

WHAT'S GREAT
- All your favorite Nintendo characters in one epic fight
- Top-notch production values
- Mega Man!

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT
- Development seems a bit rushed

INFAMOUS: SECOND SON

Met the new son, different than the old son • Words: Hollander Cooper

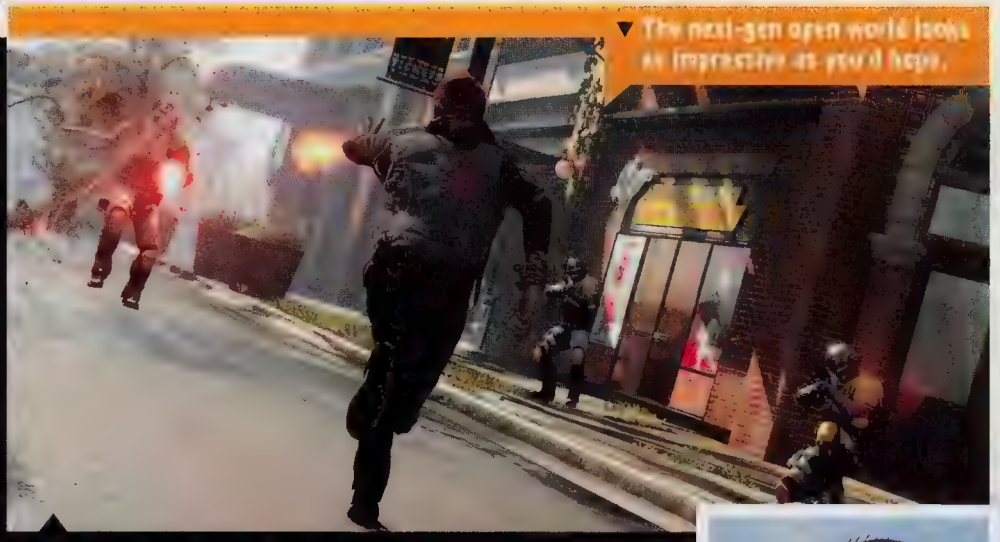
Meet Delsin Rowe, your average 24-year-old street artist living in the normal city of Seattle. Oh, wait, he's actually not that average: Delsin is a Conduit, which means he has superpowers. And Seattle hasn't been normal since the Department of Unified Protection put the city under martial law and declared people like Delsin to be bioterrorists. Maybe things aren't so run-of-the-mill in *Second Son* after all.

Set seven years after the events of the previous *Infamous* games, in which a device was detonated that awakened powers in thousands of humans, *Second Son* pits Delsin against DUP, which has locked down the city and begun rounding up (and likely killing) anyone who shows signs of powers. Luckily, he can control smoke and embers, which make blowing up security checkpoints and defending himself against armed soldiers much more fun.

That's the thing that makes him so different from most game protagonists—Delsin actually looks like he's enjoying himself, whether he's throwing smoke bombs, blasting fire embers from his hands like bullets, or turning into a puff of smoke to effortlessly move through occupied Seattle. He always has a smile on his face, making it clear that he really, really appreciates his newfound powers. He's also able to leap 100 feet in the air, spin around, and then slam back down in a massive explosion. Delsin is a total rock star.

And his roster of special moves doesn't stop there, either. He can also absorb abilities from other Conduits, so he'll be upgraded with different super strengths as the game goes on. At one point he interacted with Abigail Walker, a Conduit with electricity powers (not unlike former *Infamous* star Cole MacGrath), and walked away firing bolts from his hands. Yeah, the idea of a character being able to suck the special skills of other people isn't all that original—it's been Mega Man and Kirby's beat for two decades—but odds are no one will complain when they're flying through the air, blasting both fire and lightning on hapless goons below.

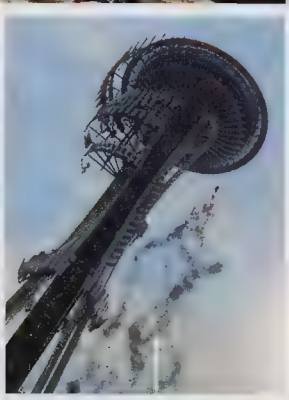
Delsin's ember powers let him burn enemies' faces off.



▼ The next-gen open world looks as impressive as you'd hope.

WELCOME TO SEATTLE \\

Sure, it isn't as massive and sprawling as the first *Infamous'* Empire City (based on New York City), or as full of character as the sequel's New Marais (inspired by New Orleans), but the real-life Seattle still makes for an intriguing location in *Second Son*, if only for the fact that we haven't explored it in games very often. Plus, who doesn't want to fly up the Space Needle?



Martial Law: The Department of Unified Protection has Seattle on lockdown.

Blasting Off: Jumping into the sky and then smacking back down is Delsin's specialty.

DON'T GET DUPED \\

The Department of Unified Protection talks a big game about "protecting people from bioterrorists" and "trying to prevent further deaths," but you'd best keep your eye on them anyway. They've begun rounding up Conduits and locking them away—possibly killing them in cold blood. Plus, they've started to hire Conduits to help hunt other superpowered humans. So hypocritical.

THE FETCHING ABIGAIL WALKER \\

Abigail Walker, aka "Fetch," aka the woman who Delsin takes his neon electronic powers from, remains somewhat of a mystery. She shows up in the game's latest trailer, where it appears as though Delsin is turning her over to DUP, but we'll have to wait and see.

PS4

GAME DETAILS

INFAMOUS: SECOND SON

INFO
Publisher: Sony Computer Entertainment
Developer: Sucker Punch Productions
Platforms: PS4

RELEASE DATE
February 2014

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
TBA

GENRE
Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR
Gamers looking for the first big next-gen sandbox

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Saints Row IV will give you the open-world super moves you desire.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Infamous: Second Son*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Stealing powers should mean lots of variety
- ❤ Delsin's a superhero who actually seems to enjoy being a superhero

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Previous star Cole is nowhere to be found
- ✖ It's not a launch title

This is what it looks like when a Mechtrooper goes toe-to-toe with a Mechtoid. Awesome, yeah?

XCOM: ENEMY WITHIN

Time to face extinction all over again • Words: Ryan Taljonick

Where a decade of no-consequence shooters taught gamers to run blindly into a firefight, 2012's turn-based strategy game *XCOM: Enemy Unknown* forcefully reminded them to embrace caution. We've all lost decorated soldiers to Sectoids, Mutons, and especially those darn Chrysalids, and even if you've managed to survive an Ironman playthrough of *Enemy Unknown*, you're probably still itching for some payback. Enter Firaxis Games' meaty upcoming expansion, *Enemy Within*, which comes packed to the brim with new maps, gear, enemies, and tons of awesome upgrades.

Unlike expansions for most games, *Enemy Within* isn't just a small addition; it'll turn *Enemy Unknown* into a whole new experience complete with supplemental story missions and exciting new toys. The basic framework is still in place: You'll start with humble beginnings, fighting off an alien invasion with ill-equipped soldiers all while building up the XCOM headquarters.

New buildings, like the Cybernetics Lab and Gene Lab, provide access to powerful units: the Mechtrooper and genetically modified soldiers. Mechtroopers are every bit as awesome as they sound. In my hands-on demo, I charged into a group of puny Sectoids, using the Mechtroopers' flamethrower to incinerate them to ash. Not amused by my actions, a Mechtoid—a Sectoid in a giant suit of power armor—smacked me with a few blasts of plasma from its dual cannons. I answered back with Kinetic Strike, a rocket-powered punch that sent it sprawling into a nearby car, which instantly exploded.

Afterward, I positioned my genetically modified sniper next to a nearby building; using her Muscle Fiber Density mod, she effortlessly leapt to the structure's roof and got the bead on a Muton in the distance. One carefully placed headshot later and the target was gone for good. Then, right as I thought I was in the clear, a Sectoid Commander attempted to mind control one of my soldiers. Luckily for me, that particular soldier also had a gene mod, Neural Feedback, which caused the mind control to backfire, killing the meddlesome alien in an instant.

Of course, all these new units aren't exactly cheap, and you'll have to survive some particularly brutal challenges in order to obtain the resources necessary to produce them. Think you've got what it takes? You'll find out this November when *Enemy Within* releases.

Destructible cover means you'll have to pay far more attention to what you're hiding behind.

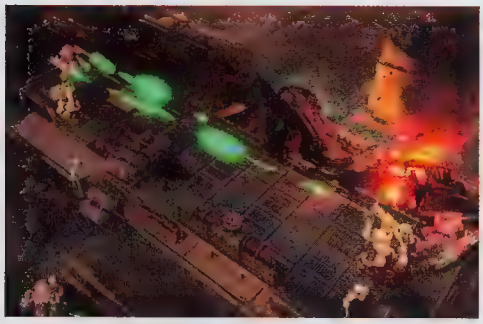
TAKE COVER \\

As is generally the rule when engaged in a firefight (or so I'm told), cover is your friend. Though you'll still receive the same defensive bonuses from cover in Enemy Within as you did in Unknown, don't get too comfy—certain enemies can destroy the barricades you'll hide behind. Don't fret, though: You, too, can destroy cover with some weapons and class-specific skills.

UH OH

Little does this doomed soldier know that his measly shotgun is no match against the might of a Mechtoid.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS, COMMANDER \\



▲ Watch out for the Mechtoid's dual plasma cannons. They hurt *a lot*.

▲ You can genetically modify some soldiers' brain, eyes, legs, skin, and chest.

FARM OF TERROR \\

One of the new maps I got to play during my demo was a re-creation of a classic farm map from 1994's X-COM: UFO Defense. Stepping foot into that place brought back harrowing memories of getting smoked by hidden Sectoids, or being helplessly devoured by old-school Chrysalids. Terrifying.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS

XCOM: ENEMY WITHIN

INFO
Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Firaxis Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE
November 12, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
TBA

GENRE
Turn-based strategy

SUITABLE FOR
Alien invasion survivors looking for some extra payback

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Fire Emblem: Awakening may not have aliens, but it offers great turn-based strategy on 3DS.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *XCOM: Enemy Within*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Mechtroopers and Gene Mods are awesome
- ❤ Mechtoids act as a counterbalance for all the new toys
- ❤ Tons of new maps, story missions, and more

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Will there be enough here to justify a purchase?

THERE'S NO NEED TO EXIT ONE MODE TO PLAY ANOTHER

NEED FOR SPEED RIVALS

Start braking your friends' hearts, one by one • Words: Andy Eddy

Between their scores and easily measurable achievements, videogames have always naturally lent themselves to competition. But over the last few years developers have devised clever new ways to get us all clawing for the top spot. Starting with 2010's *Need for Speed Hot Pursuit*, EA's Autolog feature inspired spontaneous competition between players, even when they weren't online together, by pushing word of each player's new records and accomplishments to other friends playing the same game. The classic urge to play "just one more game" suddenly felt much more urgent.

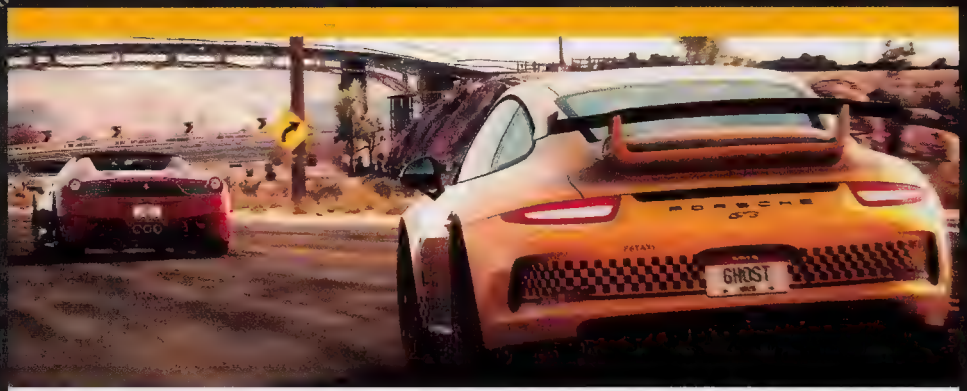
The latest *NfS* game, *Rivals*, will blur the lines between single-player and multiplayer even further, thanks to a feature called AllDrive. When you start the game, you won't have to select the mode you want to play; you'll simply pick your "side" (racers or cops), choose the car you want to use, and enter the game world. There will always be activities to partake in, whether it's formal races and events or just a driver from the other side passing and engaging you in a cat-and-mouse chase. And that driver next to you could be AI or another live player. It's all seamless, with no need to exit one mode to play another.

Competitive elements are peppered everywhere, and you'll constantly earn "Speedpoints" just for playing around. Even during races against others you'll want to monitor your always-onscreen SpeedList for objectives to beat, such as drifting for a certain number of seconds or exceeding a specific speed for a duration. You'll make progress on the career side of your game even while in the middle of multiplayer events.

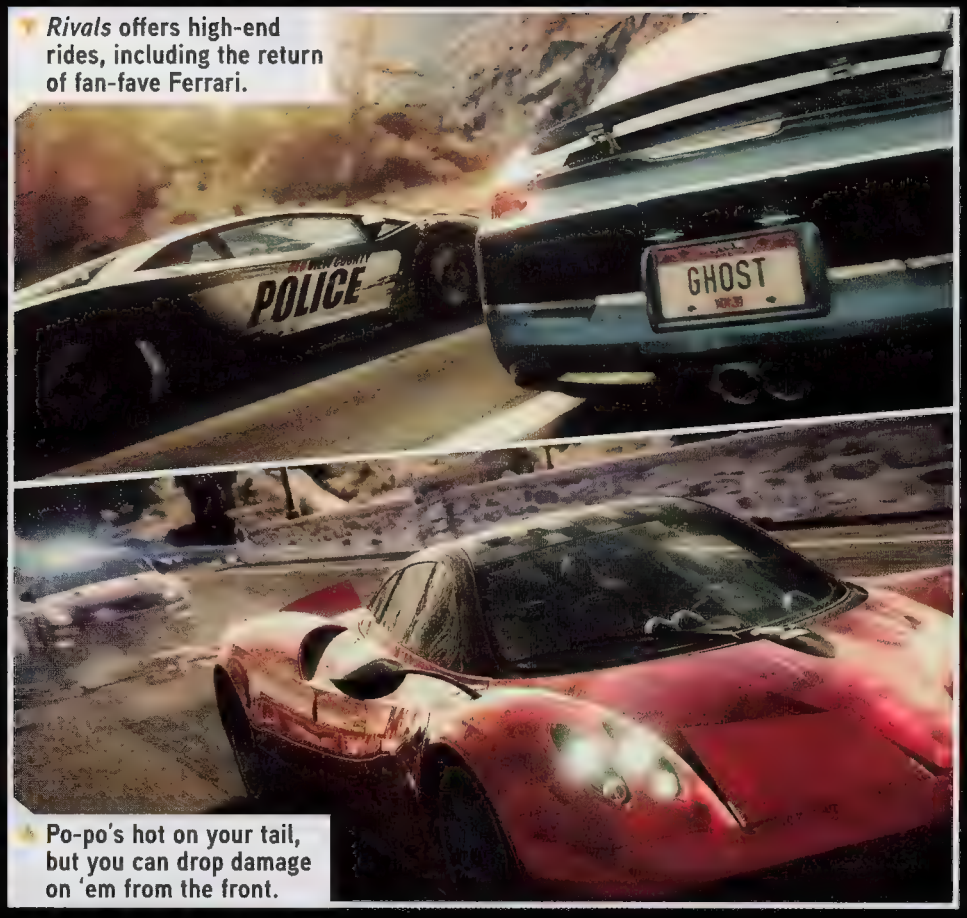
The Autolog feature has been improved as well, as now you'll be competing against friends for not just best times in events, but also in how quickly you can complete specific SpeedLists.

If you have a tablet or smartphone, the *Need for Speed Network* app will enable you to view your in-game map, set waypoints, and more, all in real time. However, through the app's Overwatch mode, you'll also be able to engage with other friends—even if you're not playing in the main *Rivals* game on your console or PC (see the "Ping a Pal" sidebar).

With *Rivals* we have a racer in which you can't even be sure when you're competing against fellow humans. That's pretty crazy—I can't wait.



**MAKE IT YOUR OWN ** On the racer's side, there are tons of personalization options, including elaborate multilayer paint jobs and full-body wraps, as well as myriad car improvements you can purchase. If you play as a cop, you'll be able to...change your license plate. Hey, don't get upset—cop rides are pretty fully equipped. The real fun on either side comes from pursuit tech, which affords some cool weapons, such as spike strips, stun mines, and EMP disruptors.



Rivals offers high-end rides, including the return of fan-fave Ferrari.

Po-po's hot on your tail, but you can drop damage on 'em from the front.

**PING A PAL ** Using Overwatch mode via a tablet or smartphone enables you to connect to your friends' games to help (giving them a speed boost, for example) or hinder (such as putting a roadblock in their path or summoning a police helicopter). On the console/PC side you can turn down anyone's request to jump into your game to keep them from clogging up your world.

PS3 XBOX 360 PS4 XBOX ONE PC

GAME DETAILS

NEED FOR SPEED RIVALS

INFO
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Ghost Games, Criterion Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One, PC

RELEASE DATE
November 19, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 6-player online on PS3, Xbox 360, PC; player count TBA on PS4, Xbox One

GENRE
Racing-action

SUITABLE FOR
Police academy hopefuls... and dropouts

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Codemasters' *Grid 2* will prepare you for racing, drifting, and other road-based mayhem.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Need for Speed Rivals*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Fabulous structure for points gathering and police pursuits
- ❤ Well-organized co-op/competition
- ❤ Switch between racer and cop in a snap

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Could the high-speed hijinks get *too* chaotic?

FORZA MOTORSPORT 5

Leading the Xbox One launch pack • Words: Andrew Hayward

Console debuts are a great time to see favorite franchises reborn with a dazzling new coat of paint, and that's exactly what you can expect with *Forza Motorsport 5*. Maintaining the stellar simulation core and excellent handling of earlier entries—it's barely been two years since the superb Forza 4 on Xbox 360, after all—Turn 10's latest racing entry puts the Xbox One hardware to good use granting incredible detail to the glossy licensed supercars and real-world tracks, both of which redefine photorealism in the genre.

The guts of the Xbox One make for not only a sleeker racer, but a much smarter one as well. Putting the console's online cloud-powered processing techniques to inventive use, *Forza 5* introduces a new "Drivatar" system, which replaces traditional opponent artificial intelligence models by creating a computer-controller driver that learns from your on-track decisions. The Drivatar thinks like you behind the wheel, and will appear as an opponent in the races of both friends and random players alike—plus you'll earn in-game credits for your Drivatar's actions when you're at work, sleeping, or playing other games.

THE GUTS OF THE XBOX ONE MAKE FOR A SLEEKER, SMARTER RACER

What results are smarter opponents in every game mode, not to mention incentive to improve your skills to enhance your Drivatar's performance. It's a clever hook that's sure to be an intriguing tweak to the Forza formula. Beyond that, expect a more robust version—including the addition of open-wheel cars for the first time (see our car-by-car breakdown on the next page)—of perhaps the most reliably fantastic racing franchise in recent memory. *Forza Motorsport 5* controls like a dream and looks like it, too; and if there's any sure bet within the Xbox One launch lineup, *Forza*'s likely it.

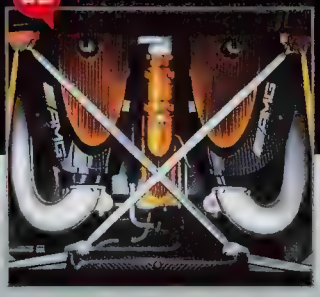
@GAMER XTRA

Sign up for *@GAMER*'s digital edition to access bonus content here, like gameplay video from *Forza 5*.

**PERFECTLY IMPERFECT ** Next-gen processing is so amazing that Forza 5's designers actually had to make the cars look *less* pristine—like adding small scratches, revealed by the changing light—to attain more realism. Cars feature 1000-plus materials each, and multiple paint layers are separately affected by collisions.

01 SPEED
The 2013 Chevrolet #1 Andretti Autosport Dallara DW12 can hit 230 mph, and brings open-wheel racing to *Forza*.

02 BEAUTY
Pagani's 2012 Huayra is an exorbitant but stunning beast; the real-world version will set you back more than a million.



03 PRECISION
Only 375 of the actual 2013 McLaren P1 will ever be produced, but this smooth-driving stunner is included in *Forza 5*.

**BRAGGING RIGHTS ** The Xbox One's Game DVR functionality constantly records the last five minutes of gameplay, letting you stop at any time to edit a clip and share it with friends. Just had the lap of a lifetime? Cut up and personalize the footage, then push it to Xbox Live!

▲ Quick Cut
Sort through recorded footage easily, even using Kinect commands.

GAME DETAILS

FORZA MOTORSPORT 5

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft Studios
Developer: Turn 10 Studios
Platforms: Xbox One

RELEASE DATE
November 22, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Yes (details TBA)

GENRE
Racing

SUITABLE FOR
Die-hard gearheads, play-it-safe launch buyers

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Check out the series' open-world side in last year's *Forza Horizon*.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Forza Motorsport 5*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Drivatar is a genuinely new, exciting feature
- ❤ Incredibly impressive visuals
- ❤ Excellent mechanics and handling remain intact

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Will it be too similar to the recent *Forza 4*?

THE WOLF AMONG US

He'll huff, he'll puff, and he'll smash your face in • Mikel Reparaz

For police officers who have to deal with deadbeats, drunks, and domestic abusers all day, life can be tough and depressing. And if the petty criminals in question are fairy-tale characters in disguise, and the cop in this scenario is actually the infamous Big Bad Wolf in human form...well, that just complicates things, doesn't it?

That's the reality of Bigby Wolf, hard-boiled protagonist of *The Wolf Among Us*. As the sheriff of a secret community of refugee "Fables" who've fled their storybook world for 1980s New York, it's his job to maintain order among volatile, supernatural beings ordered to keep low profiles. Beings like Mr. Toad of *The Wind in the Willows*, who right now is wearing a bathrobe, an undershirt, and—most strikingly—no human disguise.

As Bigby, I can direct the conversation, choosing whether to threaten Toad into renewing his glamour (a spell that keeps his identity hidden), let him off with a warning, or simply turn a blind eye. In any case, Toad's the one who called Bigby; one of his tenants, the Woodsman, is drunk and berserk, and from the screams it's clear he's trashing more than his apartment

RED RIDING HOOD'S SAVIOR IS NOW AN ANGRY DRUNK

It's possible the first episode of *The Wolf Among Us* is already out as you read this, in which case you may have already had a chance to find out for yourself what happens next. Like *The Walking Dead* before it, however, *Wolf*—based on another award-winning series of graphic novels, *Fables*—is planned as a lengthy episodic series that will strive to inject emotional depth and gritty realism into characters like the Three Little Pigs and Snow White. And it's off to a good start with its first episode, which offers a chance to break up a domestic fight and brutally throw down with an old nemesis before the opening credits even roll.

▲ Want an answer out of the Magic Mirror? Maybe try talking to it in rhyme.

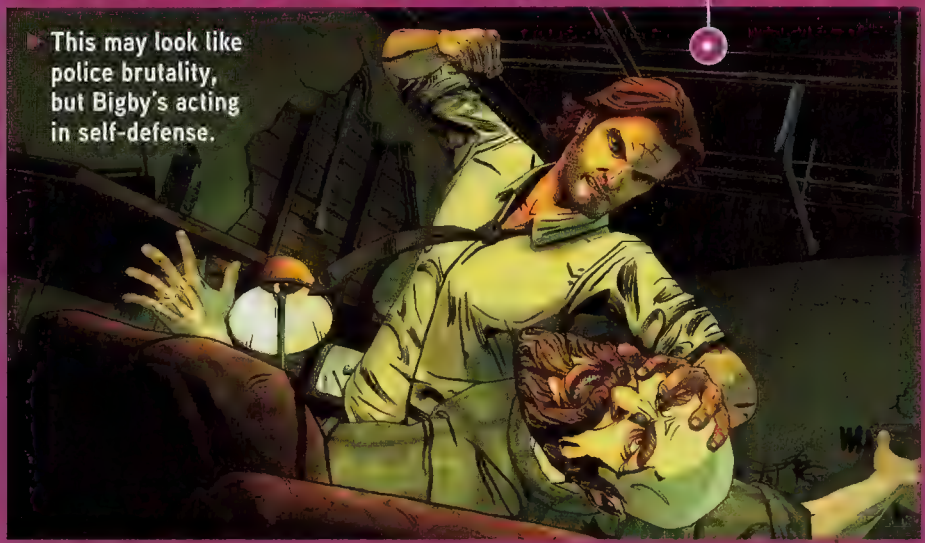
▲ Fables are resilient. It'll take more than a three-story drop to kill Bigby Wolf.

TWO-FISTED JUSTICE

Like *The Walking Dead*, gameplay in *Wolf* consists of conversations punctuated by action sequences, which take the form of quick-time events. These are more involved, however, as surviving a brawl with the Woodsman involves precise timing, aim, and unexpected button presses to keep you on your toes. Not exactly hardcore, but the fights look amazing.

ROLE REVERSAL

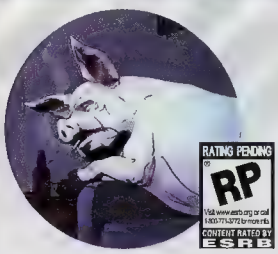
The Woodsman may have been Little Red Riding Hood's savior once, but now he's just an angry drunk—and even more dangerous than he looks.



▲ This may look like police brutality, but Bigby's acting in self-defense.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS



THE WOLF AMONG US

INFO
Publisher: Telltale Games
Developer: Telltale Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

RELEASE DATE
Fall 2013 (Episode 1)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only

GENRE
Adventure

SUITABLE FOR
Fans of strong storytelling, be it of the noir, fairy tale, or Telltale variety

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

The Walking Dead plays a lot like *Wolf*—and it's one of this generation's best games, period.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *The Wolf Among Us*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ *The Walking Dead*'s incredible writing applied to a vibrant new universe
- ❤ Bright, colorful aesthetic that contrasts nicely with the noir tone
- ❤ Big Bad Wolf as the hero is compelling

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Telltale's record isn't spotless: *Jurassic Park*?

Jago
The ninja hero sports a noticeably grittier redesign this time around.
Sabrewulf
Brutal, claw-centric combos still mark this old favorite's repertoire.

KILLER INSTINCT

Flashback fighter tries a free-to-play approach • Words: Andrew Hayward

Following a pair of arcade entries that spread to Nintendo platforms in the mid-'90s, it seemed like we'd never hear from *Killer Instinct* again. The glossy, combo-crazy fighter entertained with its diverse characters and ritzy presentation back when, but never built up the level of popularity of competitors like *Street Fighter* or Mortal Kombat, and laid dormant following 1996's *Killer Instinct Gold*.

But with the fighting genre in full swing once more, Microsoft hopes that a blend of pent-up nostalgia and a modern business model will push *Killer Instinct* to new heights on Xbox One. While original developer Rare is under the Microsoft umbrella, Double Helix Games (*Battleship*) is actually taking the lead on the reboot. But despite that change, there's quite a bit of classic fighter nostalgia on tap here.

Swift-kicking ninja Jago, beastly brawler Sabrewulf, shape-shifting ice creature Glacius, and tomahawk-swinging Thunder have all been showcased to date with updated character designs, with others expected to return. Moreover, the game brings back the famed Ultra Combos, which compile dozens of frenzied hits into one massive, amusingly violent attack.

CAPTURES THE FRENZIED FEEL OF PAST ENTRIES

However, while the series' roots are still on full display, *Killer Instinct* won't (and arguably can't) rest solely on its past elements to succeed in this day and age. Multiple new characters are planned for the game, including a yet-to-be-named female fighter with spider-like tendencies and blade-like pincers. More pressingly, the game will be released in free-to-play form with only Jago included, allowing you to purchase additional fighters individually or pay for discounted bundles.

Killer Instinct successfully captures the frenzied feel of past entries, based on what I've played, though whether it can hang tough with modern fighting favorites—especially with that free-to-play approach—remains to be seen.

FIGHTERS IN SEASON \\

Killer Instinct's combatants will be introduced in waves across multiple "seasons" of content, with a total of eight fighters expected in season one and more planned for a second go-round. Six of those first eight fighters will be playable at launch.

PLAYER ONE

Jago will be the lone freebie fighter; all others can be purchased within.

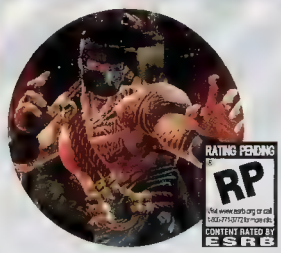
C-C-C-COMBO BREAKER!

**KILLER DEALS? ** At $20, the Combo Breaker bundle gets you all of the first season fighters, but real series diehards will want to spring for the $40 Ultra Edition pack. That gets you the fighters, alternate skins for each, and an emulated (but offline-only) version of the original Killer Instinct arcade game from 1994.

▲ Detailed stages and vibrant visual effects put the Xbox One hardware to solid use.

▲ New special maneuvers can quickly turn the tide in battle once your meter fills.

GAME DETAILS



KILLER INSTINCT

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft Studios
Developer: Double Helix Games
Platforms: Xbox One

RELEASE DATE
Q4 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 2-player online and local

GENRE
Fighting

SUITABLE FOR
Nostalgic Nintendo-era fans, freebie dabblers

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Flashy combos? Frantic action? *Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3* has you covered.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

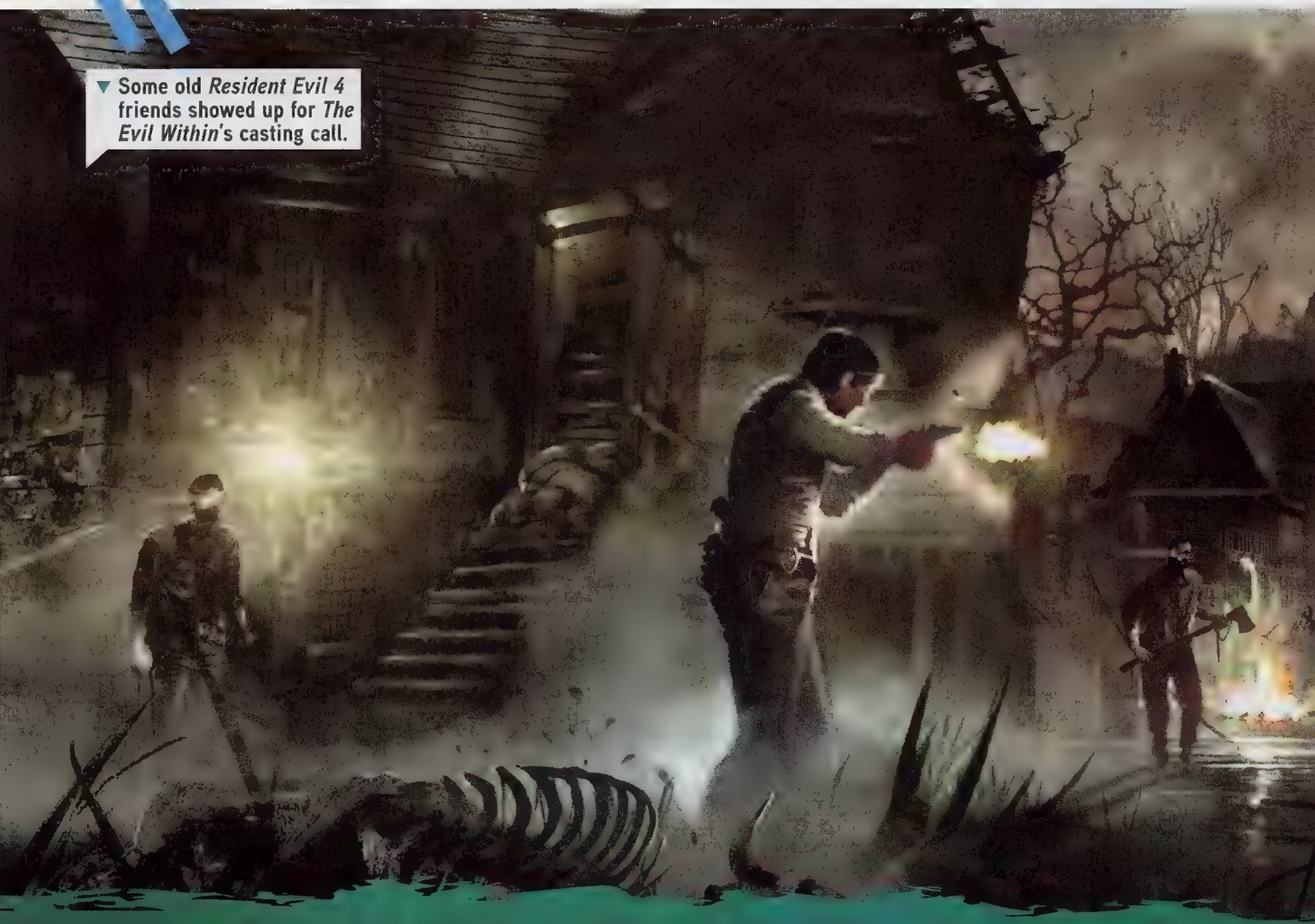
Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Killer Instinct*.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- Awesome to see old favorites brought back
- Maintains classic feel while expanding mechanics

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Free-to-play model could diminish gameplay
- Can this revival live up to current genre leaders?



▼ Some old *Resident Evil 4* friends showed up for *The Evil Within*'s casting call.

THE EVIL WITHIN

Returning the survival horror genre to its roots · Words: Matt Cabral

Moments into my *The Evil Within* demo, protagonist Sebastian Castellanos finds himself hanging upside-down from a meat hook, staring at his own blood pooling on the floor below. The detective is in better shape than the dude next to him, however; also dangling like a length of sausage, his already-expired neighbor is soon chopped down by a hulking figure, then tossed onto a blood-stained block for further dissection.

In a scene that will test more nerves than reflexes, Castellanos desperately struggles to reach a blade stuck in another nearby victim, even as the amateur butcher continues reducing a man to sirloin tips in the background. Upon grabbing the knife and freeing himself, Castellanos engages the madman in a tension-ratcheting game of cat and mouse. Impeded by a nasty leg injury, he slowly navigates the human slaughterhouse, attempting to outsmart the maniac—who's now wielding a buzzing chainsaw—at every nail-biting turn.

I won't spoil the conclusion, but suffice it to say Detective Castellanos' bad day is just beginning, and only going to get worse. Of course, that's entirely the point, as *The Evil Within*'s aiming to recapture a time when horror games were more interested in scaring the pants off players than arming them to the teeth. Based on my genuinely frightening first look, it seems well on its way to achieving that goal.

MORE INTERESTED IN SCARING YOU THAN ARMING YOU TO THE TEETH

@GAMER XTRA

In *@GAMER*'s digital edition, you could watch the same *Evil Within* demo we got right here.

PSYCHO-LOGICAL SCARES

My demo doesn't open with a gunfight, but with a deliberately paced, unsettling scene; Castellanos arrives at a mental hospital, where a sea of abandoned cop cars foreshadow the horrors hidden within the asylum's walls.

FRIGHTS AND FIREFIGHTS

While *The Evil Within* is forgoing the action-heavy focus currently defining the survival-horror genre, it's not fullly ignoring gamers' need to shoot freaks in the face. In fact, the second half of my demo found a heavily armed Castellanos fending off pitchfork-wielding foes that could have passed for *Resident Evil 4* extras.

Rather than depleting his pistol's scarce ammo, however, he relied on explosive mine traps to turn the hordes into pulp. Developer Tango Gameworks—founded by *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami—promises that traps, both mobile and stationary, will play a big role in the game's strategic-flavored gameplay.

▲ Some of the game's enemies (I'm talking 'bout you, bright eyes) are eviler than others.

▲ Why don't security feeds ever record pretty things, like a butterfly on a puppy's nose?

PS3 XBOX 360 PS4 XBOX ONE PC

GAME DETAILS

THE EVIL WITHIN

INFO
Publisher: Bethesda Softworks
Developer: Tango Gameworks
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PS4, Xbox One, PC

RELEASE DATE
2014

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only

GENRE
Survival horror

SUITABLE FOR
Scare seekers who prefer goosebumps to guns

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Silent Hill HD Collection is an experience that taxes nerves more than trigger fingers.

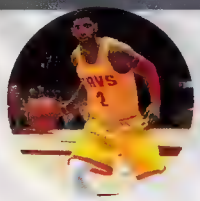
WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *The Evil Within*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Contemporary gameplay mixed with classic scares
- ❤ Atmospheric, creepy setting
- ❤ Trap-focused, strategic combat

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Do kids raised on zombie shooters even know what survival horror is?

PS4 XBOX ONE



RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NBA LIVE 14

GAME DETAILS

INFO
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Tiburon
Platforms: PS4, Xbox One

RELEASE DATE
November 15, 2013 (PS4); TBA (Xbox One)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
TBA

GENRE
Sports

SUITABLE FOR
Hoops fanatics with trusting hearts

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

NBA 2K11 redefined hardwood greatness with the Jordan Challenge.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *NBA Live 14*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Unique signature moves
- Impressive ball physics
- Historic players provide tons of personality

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Console launch-day sports games have a checkered past

NBA LIVE 14

Coming back with much to prove • Words: Richard Grisham

▼ Cover man Kyrie Irving's pull-up jumper is one of *Live*'s signature moves.

The launch of the next generation of consoles gives the NBA *Live* franchise a much-needed fresh start. Coming off two cancelled titles, *Live* is finally back on the court with a chip on its shoulder.

At its core is bounceTEK, a built-from-the-ground-up dribbling mechanic. While it may seem trivial to focus so much effort on something as unsexy as bouncing a basketball, the development team was proud to show it off. Using a virtual Kyrie Irving on the home court of his Cleveland Cavaliers, it was interesting to observe the effects of the ball and the player truly being represented as separate physical objects. While five-on-five gameplay was not yet ready for unveiling, the possibilities for ultra-realistic defending and passing were obvious.

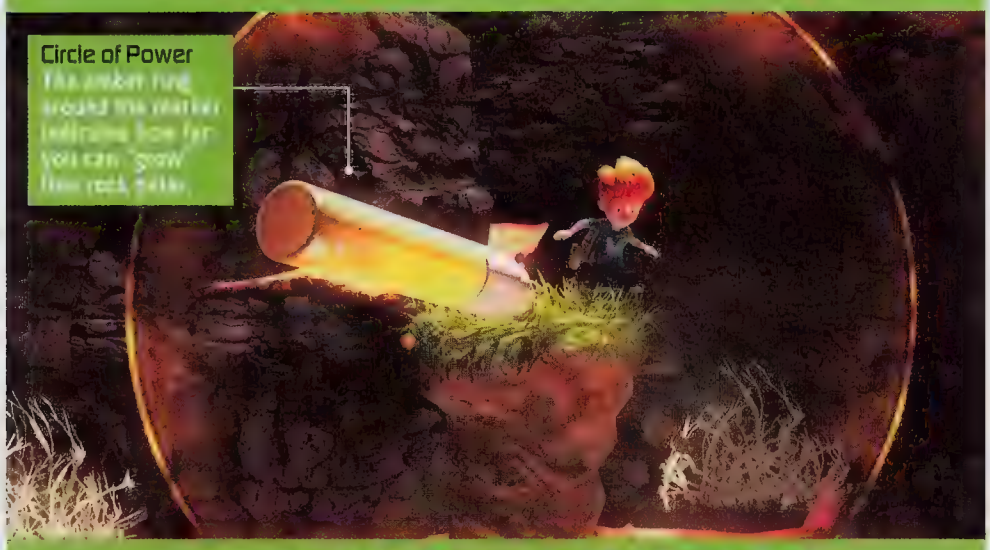
In addition to the traditional play now and franchise modes, a single-player career mode called Rising Star will put you in the shoes of a rookie hopeful. Starting off at the NBA Draft Showcase and spanning up to 25 years, you'll be able to navigate the relentless demands of being a professional player with the goal of becoming a legend. Speaking of legends, there will be ample representation of Hall of Fame players in addition to the obvious spate of current NBA ballers; exactly how these historic players will be utilized, however, remains under wraps at this stage.

I'm excited at the prospects of *Live* re-establishing competition with the incumbent *NBA 2K* series. It's the perfect way to kick off a new generation of sports games.

▲ The next-gen Ignite Engine promises more atmosphere inside the arena.

REAL-TIME ALL THE TIME \\

NBA Live 14 takes dramatic advantage of the Xbox One and PS4's online features, enabling daily updates on rosters, player attributes, and even the sneakers that stars wear. The goal is to allow you to experience your favorite teams in the most authentic, up-to-the-minute manner possible. What better way to get ready for the big game than to play it a couple of hours beforehand?



MAX: THE CURSE OF BROTHERHOOD

The world is your whiteboard · Words: Mikel Reparaz

Little brothers can be annoying sure, but reading incantations that get them kidnapped by monsters is rarely a good idea. The upshot is that there are ways to get them back, provided your name is Max and you have a magic marker imbued with elemental powers.

A puzzle-driven 3/4 platformer in the vein of classics like *Heart of Darkness* and *Flashback*, *Max: The Curse of Brotherhood* lets you create paths through its environments by drawing on the screen with a big honking marker. Unlike in *Max and the Magic Marker*, though, your marker can only be used on special glowing spots, and has very specific effects (that work within a specific radius) depending on the spot. Using an Earth power, for example, lets you call vertical columns of rock into existence—great for quickly escaping monsters (if you ever mess under yourself), lifting heavy objects, or simply getting yourself up to a nearby ledge. Later powers let you create horizontal branches, dangling vines (which can be connected to branches and strategically cut to get Max swinging), and water spouts that can carry Max across chasms or up to inaccessible ledges.

Switching between controlling Max and drawing with the marker took a little getting used to, and despite the kid-friendly vibe, death came swiftly and often whenever I missed a jump or didn't draw an object into being fast enough. Even so, the puzzles challenge you to think creatively while being quick on your feet, and my brief time with Max was mostly fun. ◉

MORE THAN PUZZLES

Max's focus is on its environmental puzzles, but don't expect a slow, cerebral platformer—saving his brother Felix from monsters means facing a lot of those monsters, and while you don't often have the means to kill them outright, you'd better be fast when it's time to outrun or outwit them. And monsters are far from the only danger that requires rapid reflexes to survive.

▲ This monster will show up periodically to chase Max. When he does, just run.

XBOX 360 XBOX ONE

GAME DETAILS

MAX: THE CURSE OF BROTHERHOOD

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft Studios
Developer: Press Play
Platforms: Xbox 360, Xbox One

RELEASE DATE
Q1 2014

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only

GENRE
Puzzle platformer

SUITABLE FOR
Those who like their complex environmental physics puzzles with a dash of whimsy

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!

Max and the Magic Marker is a good way to familiarize yourself with the basic gameplay.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Max: The Curse of Brotherhood.*

WHAT'S GREAT:
- **Cleverly inventive environmental puzzles**
- **Beautiful visuals and expressive characters**

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- **Switching between platforming and drawing on the world takes getting used to**

WATCH_DOGS

The smartphone is mightier than the sword in Ubisoft's sandbox cyber-thriller

• Words: Matt Cabral

Seconds into my hands-on session with *Watch_Dogs*, the game makes it abundantly clear that I'm not playing another chaos-encouraging *Grand Theft Auto* clone. Upon pulling an assault rifle from protagonist Aiden Pearce's trench coat, a civilian whips out a cell phone to call the cops.

As sirens begin wailing in the background, the Ubisoft developer sitting beside me suggests I put away the weapon, run like the dickens, and reconsider my strategy. Where a sandbox game like, say, *Saints Row*, might reward trigger-happy gamers for unleashing senseless bullet storms, *Watch_Dogs* players are better off adopting a cyber-stealth approach.

Of course, favoring hacks over headshots doesn't necessarily put Pearce on higher moral ground than the criminal ladder-climbers of other games. In fact, my first task behind the master code-cracker's smartphone is to siphon some cash from an innocent civilian of my choice.

Clicking the PS4 controller's left stick brings up the "Profiler," a HUD overlay revealing intel on all NPCs within my line of sight. On top of displaying each potential target's name, age, occupation, and income, the tool teases some personal info; scanning over various passersby, I quickly discover a person who "donates to [a] televangelist," another who "believes in [a] future ape uprising," and a well-dressed gent who "frequently purchases concert tickets."

This last person is of particular interest because his details are accompanied by a blue credit-card icon; while other possible victims display similar symbols, the color blue indicates a higher yield—in this case, $2000 higher. Upon dipping into the dude's concert fund from the phone, I head to a nearby ATM—which pops on the HUD post-hack—and withdraw the money with a tap of a button.

With a crisp 20 Benjamins in his pocket and no blood on his hands, Pearce nonchalantly strolls past the guy he just robbed in broad daylight.

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF THINGS I CAN MANIPULATE

▲ **DRESSED TO TEXT** Who knew a trench coat, mask, turtleneck, and ball cap combo could be a fashion statement?

WHEN CELL PHONES FAIL

While *Watch_Dogs* encourages code-breaking over neck-snapping, its "360 approach," as animation director Colin Graham calls it, lets you choose a silent or violent path. Cyber-sleuthing skills aside, Pearce is no basement-dwelling-dweeb; whether brandishing his bone-shattering baton or wielding high-powered weapons, he can clear crowds of baddies as easily as he can burn through firewalls.

During my demo, I get the opportunity to unleash his less-subtle side when a stealthy approach goes south. Having infiltrated the well-guarded grounds of a CTOS building—a data center protecting the neighborhood's digital grid—I find a number of hackable items; from fork lifts to security cams, there's no shortage of things I can manipulate to both distract and survey my enemies.

Unfortunately, with the intel-protecting router I need to access just steps away, my craving for valuable data undermines my careful approach. Within seconds of being spotted, I'm forced to take cover from hails of gunfire. With Pearce's cell phone now as useful as a waffle maker, I access the game's well-stocked weapon wheel.

With an auto-assault rifle shouldered, I spray a bevy of bullets while ducking and climbing through cover—triggered with context-sensitive buttons, my movements feel as smooth as they do in any dedicated third-person shooter. Coupled with the smooth-as-butter gunplay, a slo-mo "Focus Mode" that'd make Max Payne proud helps me clear the area with relative ease.

Of course, a parking lot full of corpses also brings the cops, so it isn't long before I'm trading my firepower for Pearce's evasion-assisting smartphone once again.

HACK JOB

After spending 45 minutes creating cyber-mayhem, the tables are unexpectedly turned on me.

As my demo's concluding, a blue circle appears on the HUD, indicating someone within its radius is attempting to hack me. What follows is a frantic, time-sensitive search for the perpetrator, who eventually flees before he can download my data.

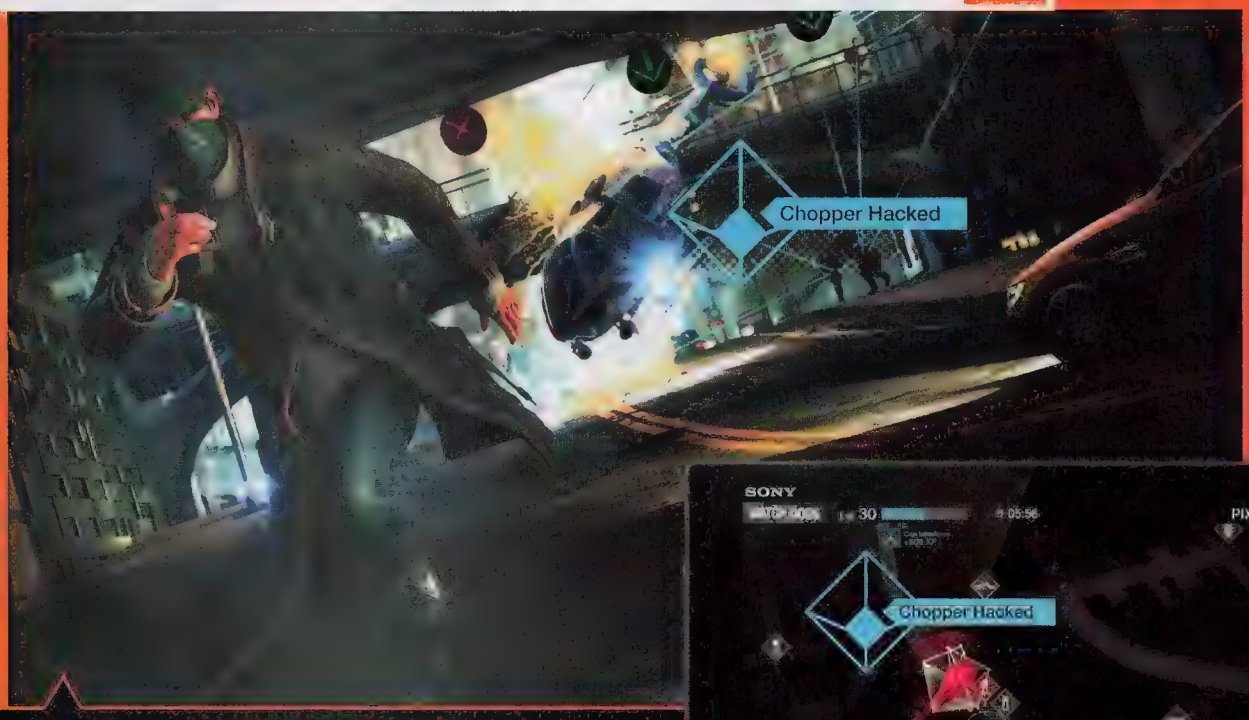
Turns out this rival hacker isn't a nosy NPC, but a live player who infiltrated my game. Demoing *Watch_Dogs*' "seamless multiplayer," a developer had entered my single-player campaign as a civilian—although he still appeared as Aiden on his own screen—and triggered this impromptu game of cat-and-mouse.

Had he successfully accessed my network, he would've boosted his leaderboard rep while also earning valuable XP that could be spent on upgrades in his campaign. While this mode is a fast, fun way to supplement your XP income, it won't activate during critical missions and can, in fact, be blocked entirely by players who don't want to be bothered.

WHO IS THAT MASKED MAN?

What drives a man to terrorize Chicago's infrastructure by hacking into everything from its street lights to ATMs? Well, according to *Watch_Dogs*' lead story designer Kevin Shortt, Pearce isn't just playing with traffic patterns and emptying cash machines for kicks. "Aiden Pearce is an ex-fixer, a mercenary who takes on contracts. He knows how to handle weapons and knows how to handle himself on the street, but he's also very adept at hacking. A job went bad for him, people close to him were hurt quite severely, so now he's broken away from that and is trying to find out who attempted to attack him and ended up attacking his family...it's what drives him through the game."

TOUCH-SCREEN TERRORIST



Before my demo of *Watch_Dogs*' second-screen functionality, lead designer Philippe Baude says, "Forget everything you know about companion apps." Dubbed *CTOS Mobile*, it isn't another map-and-stats campaign app, but a full-on competitive mode pitting mobile and console players against each other.

As CTOS (central operating system) agents, tablet users are tasked with stopping Pearce from reaching objectives within a set time limit. For console gamers, this means racing around town, trying to avoid traps—raised pylons and bridges, reprogrammed traffic lights, and pursuing police cars—set by the second-screen player. The armchair agent also enjoys a bird's eye view of the action from a chopper they control with a few finger swipes.

Both participants earn XP based on success and, unlike the hacking multiplayer mode, *CTOS Mobile* requires invitations to be sent and accepted before the chase can begin. The app is free, so you need only a tablet and Wi-Fi connection to get in on the Aiden-griefing action.

◂ CAR VERSUS CHOPPER
Despite the odds being seemingly stacked against Aiden, agents can lose his location if they don't keep their eye-in-the-sky on his speeding vehicle's every move.

"AIDEN PEARCE IS AN EX-FIXER, A MERCENARY..."

PIGGYBACK HACK

Behind a smartphone that could make James Bond jealous, Pearce can cause blackouts, reroute Chicago's L Train, and make ATMs spit cash at his command. One of my favorite—if less flashy—hacking abilities, though, lets you bypass the usual line-of-sight requirement by piggybacking on surveillance cameras. You can compromise items and targets from around corners, or even several streets away, as long as you can spy them through a security cam.

HERO OR HEARTLESS?

Pearce has been compared to Batman, but his morals don't always match those of the do-gooding Dark Knight. I was able to gain access to a woman's apartment via her webcam—and that's not even the ethically shady part. Testing the flexibility of my moral fiber, I compromise her bank account...while listening to her care for a crying baby in the background. I feel awful, though, and give my next potential target, a man "awaiting a liver transplant" a pass.

According to *Watch_Dogs*' developers, the storyline won't significantly change based on your in-game behavior, but the world will react to your actions appropriately. Regardless, you'll still have to live with yourself if you decide to supplement your income with a single mom's baby-food budget.

▲ Searchlights are rarely your friends in *Watch_Dogs*. Dead cell-phone batteries are a bummer, too.

▲ Don't let his geeky smartphone fool you—Pearce can break bones with the best of 'em.

▲ Choosing targets carefully is key if you wish to make the most of Pearce's skills, while not shelving your morals.

▲ MAN WITH A PLAN
"I don't always save the world, but when I do, I do it with a cell phone."

WHY THE WINDY CITY?

If you thought *Watch_Dogs* was set in Chicago because its developers were sick of seeing virtual versions of New York City and Los Angeles get turned upside down in open-world games, you'd only be half right. According to lead story designer Kevin Shortt, Chi-Town serves as much more than a refreshing backdrop to the game's sandbox shenanigans. "We zeroed in on Chicago for a couple of reasons. For one, it's the most surveyed city in the U.S....we knew early on that we wanted a city that you could control and we quickly zeroed in on this idea of 'Smart Cities.'"

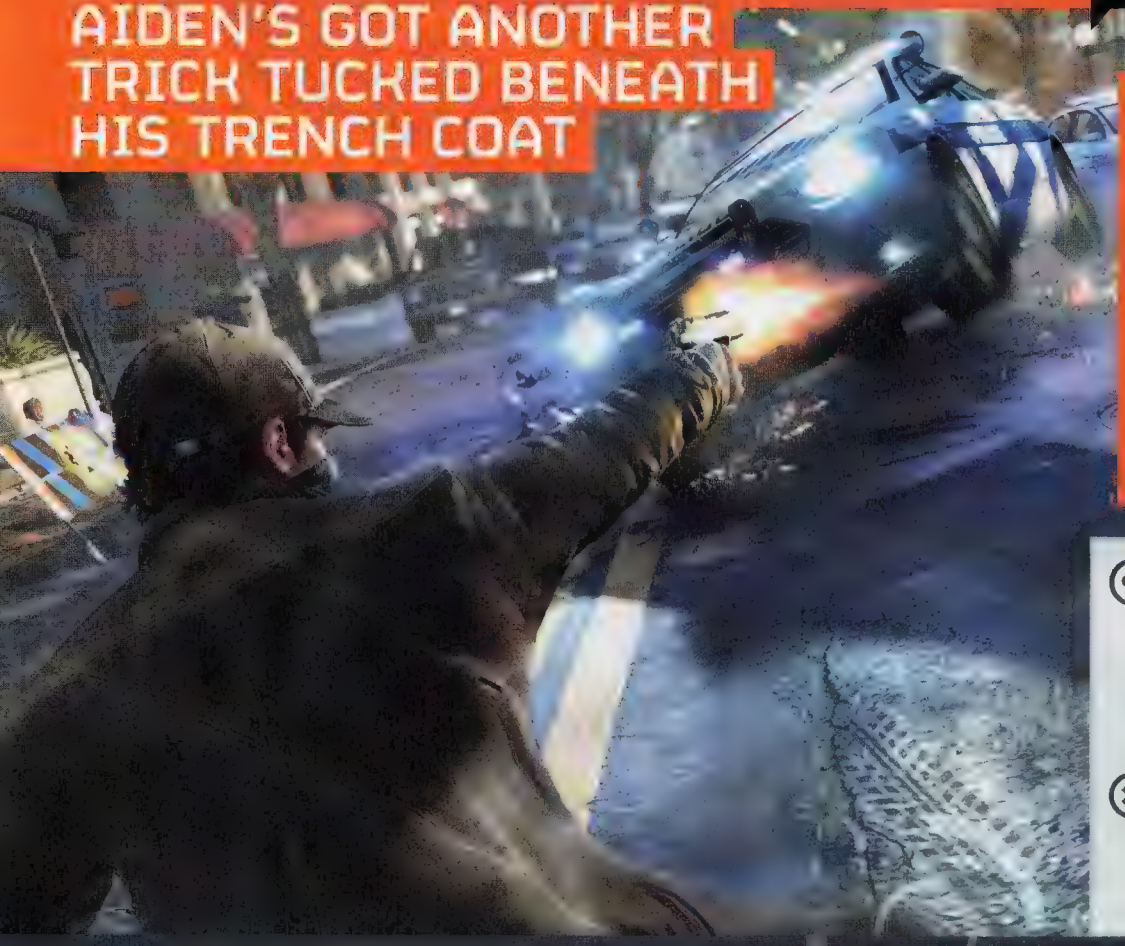
On top of picking a place that could have everything from its commuter system to communications hacked, Ubisoft Montreal was drawn to the metropolis' ability to survive and adapt. "We liked its personality as well. It's got this history...it's gone through these trials, almost, and come out the other side reborn and ready to take on the future. After the Great Fire, they built the city better and stronger, and they came out stronger after the prohibition corruption."

Once Pearce is done with the place, I'm guessing fires and liquor laws will be the least of the Windy City's problems.

▲ALWAYS NETWORKING
Despite his loner demeanor, Pearce receives plenty of help from his colorful circle of friends.

KILLER SKILLS

From hacking security cams to scoring headshots, I get to perform a variety of Pearce's vigilante talents. The multitasker's got another trick tucked beneath his trench coat, though; while I don't get to test it out, Watch_Dogs also includes a crafting system allowing players to construct mayhem-makers, such as explosives and blackout devices. A quick peek into a pawn shop reveals items like "rare tech," represented by a dangerous-looking tangle of wires and other suspicious items I can't wait to weld together.



AIDEN'S GOT ANOTHER TRICK TUCKED BENEATH HIS TRENCH COAT

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

WATCH_DOGS

INFO
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U, PS4, Xbox One, PC

RELEASE DATE
November 19, 2013 (PS4: Nov. 15)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Yes, but details TBA

GENRE
Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR
Cyber-sleuths, open-world wanderers, smartphone enthusiasts

NOT OUT YET? PLAY THIS!
The *Assassin's Creed* series' mix of stealth and brutal combat feels a lot like *Watch_Dogs*—well, minus the cool mobile phone.

WANT MORE? SCAN THIS!

Scan the QR code with your smartphone to watch the official trailer for *Watch_Dogs*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Fresh take on tired sandbox formula
- ❤ Huge open world oozing with detail
- ❤ Twists on multiplayer and tablet support

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Arriving shortly after genre granddaddy *GTA5*
- ✖ Can it possibly live up to the hype?

THE CRAZIEST GAMING GEAR YOU ACTUALLY NEED

Because sometimes, the gameplay edge you need can come from the most unexpected places

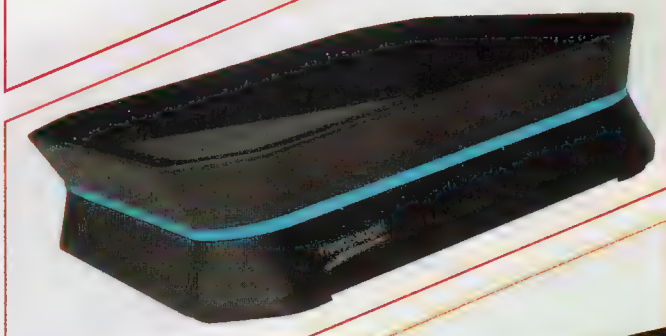
Words: Nick Pino

OUYA GAMING CONSOLE:

In a one-sentence pitch, the Ouya doesn't sound crazy. It's an Android gaming console that has hundreds of cheap indie titles, access to twitch.tv, a built-in web browser, a dozen or so emulators, and it connects via HDMI to your TV. What you will find crazy, though, is its price—a scant $99. It's hard to say no to a console that costs $20 less than two brand-new games.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

The Ouya isn't the future of gaming, but for its ability to revive local multiplayer, it deserves to be on your shelf.

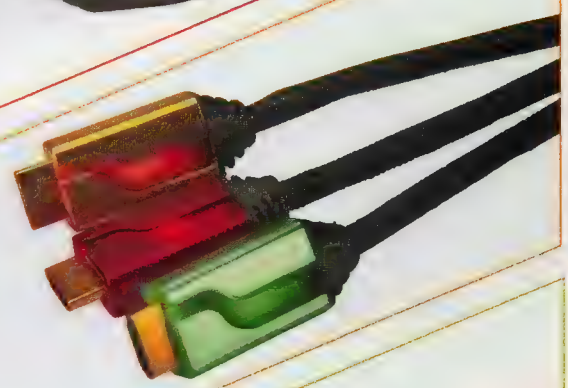


HAUPPAUGE 1512 HD PVR 2:

Have you ever had to describe that last spectacular kill in *Call of Duty* over the phone? Brag to a friend about that near-impossible "hail mary" in *Madden* without any evidence? With a Hauppauge capture system, you'll never have to...the proof is in the footage. In the age of YouTube, where an audience of millions is just a few clicks away, these things can elevate anyone's gaming status.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

The Hauppauge is a vital part of a hardcore gamer's arsenal, but is perfect for MLG icons-in-training, too.



PDP AFTERGLOW 8' HDMI CABLES:

Despite what their packaging may claim, most digital HDMI cables work exactly the same. PDP's cables, however, actually are different. You can see how just by looking at them—the multicolor LEDs not only distinguish which cable goes where (a green-tipped cable may go to your Xbox, for instance), but will also act as an indicator for whether the cable is still in working condition.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

If you own multiple consoles connected to the same TV, these cables can prove absolutely essential.

MAD CATZ R.A.T. 7 GAMING MOUSE:

If being a strangely effective PC peripheral was an Olympic sport, Mad Catz' R.A.T. 7 Gaming Mouse would bring home the gold medal. With four user-defined sensitivity settings (supporting up to a maximum senstitivity of 6400 DPI), six programmable macro buttons, and an adjustable length and thumb rest, nearly everything on this straight-out-of-*Transformers* tech is customizable. Pro PC players, roll out.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

The R.A.T. 7 is a mouse for the incessant tweaker. If you're someone who knows exactly what you like, you'll like this.

PLAYING *FORZA 4* WITH A DRIVING WHEEL IS LIKE FILLING UP YOUR TANK WITH THE BEST OF THE BEST

THRUSTMASTER FERRARI 458 ITALIA RACING WHEEL:

Playing a great driving game is a lot like maintaining a car: You can use standard unleaded gasoline (read: a controller) to get the job done, but when you want to get the most torque from your ride, it's nice to have the Super option there at the pumps. Flying down the tracks of Forza 4 with a driving wheel is the racing game equivalent of filling up your tank with the best of the best.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

For those of us still rocking a racing permit? Not necessary. Any driver with "SS"-class dreams should inquire within.

PDP AFTERGLOW WII U PRO CONTROLLER:

Though it gets a bad rap, there's a lot to admire about Nintendo's Wii U GamePad. Dual thumbsticks, gyroscopic capabilties, and front-facing camera all make party games an absolute riot. But when it comes to do-or-die in titles like *Darksiders II* or *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2*, it just won't... uh, do. Like a good teammate, though, PDP's Wii U Pro Controller won't let you go down without a fight.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

If you're looking for a "traditional" experience on your Wii U this controller is worth every penny. Plus, it glows!

GUNNAR MLG PHANTOM ONYX GLASSES:

Unlike our favorite gaming icons, we're getting older. If you have yet to feel the throbbing-eye sting of a multihour gamefest, consider yourself lucky. Those of us who have felt the pain know the cold, hard truth: Gaming isn't great for our eyes. Gunnar's patented tech aims to alleviate the burning-eye syndrome by filtering out the harshest colors in the spectrum—actually extending your gaming years.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

If you never heeded the ol' "don't sit so close to the TV" line growing up, and are now feeling the effects, you need this.

ZAGG INVISIBLE SHIELD FOR PS VITA:

Gaming consoles are an investment. Sure, they don't cost as much as a Lamborghini, but these entryways into the virtual world deserve a bit of protection from your daily life. Everything from the jutting metal keys in your pocket to the smudgy oils on your fingers take valuable years off your investment and eventually makes vibrant tech like Sony's sleek PS Vita look like a Rottweiler's chew toy.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

If you're a cautious, "keeps a toy in the package" kind of gamer, you can get by without one. If you're not, wrap it up.

MICROSOFT XBOX 360 CHATPAD:

Launching alongside the console back in 2005, I wrote the chatpad off as an unnecessary add-on. Now, eight years later, I couldn't imagine gaming without one. Perfect for shooting a quick "GG" text message to your recent players list or entering an XBLA code without dealing with the painfully slow chat interface, the chatpad helps me spend less time talking about a game and more time playing it.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

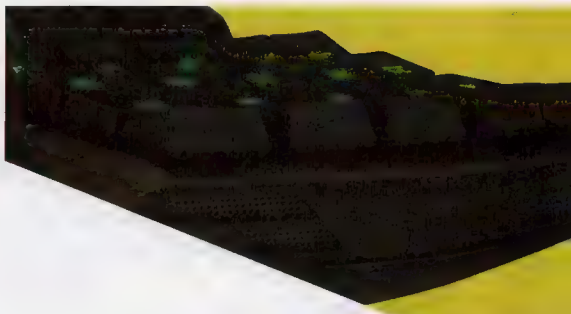
If you're a social caterpillar, not badly. But once you try it, you might emerge from your cocoon an affable butterfly.

MAD CATZ MLG PRO CIRCUIT CONTROLLER:

Taken off the store shelf, a regular Xbox 360 controller will run you anywhere from $50–60, depending on any sales going on that week. Mad Catz' MLG Pro Circuit Controller costs nearly double that—$99.99. This is going to sound crazy, but after spending 15–20 minutes with this incredibly versatile, performance-enhancing controller, you're going to feel like spending less than $100 for it is a steal.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

There's a reason the MLG Pro Circuit Controller won @GAMER's 2013 "Best Gear of the Year" award.



NERF TRIPLE ARMOR FOR NINTENDO 3DS/DS:

Accidents happen. A lot. If you're careful and use a case, however, they won't cost you a cent. The tough part about picking the right one out are that there are dozens to choose from, and whenever you trade up to a better handheld, the old case is useless. Nerf's Triple Armor is future-proof. Not only will it cover the kids' current DS or DSi, but it'll fit that 3DS you plan on getting down the road.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

Shockproof, colorful, and adjustable for every handheld in the family, Nerf's Armor is the triple threat of protection.

EPSON POWERLITE HOME CINEMA 8350 PROJECTOR:

Parsing contrast ratios and predicting possible size requirements for an ultra-large TV can be tricky. Epson's Home Cinema line of projectors takes out much of the guesswork by providing you the most pertinent info without all the technobabble. With a 4,000-hour life bulb, eight inputs ranging from HDMI to S-Video In, and a 1920 x 1080 natural resolution, this trumps a TV any day.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

Costing close to $1300, the Epson 8350 may not be a need as it is a really, really, really dire want.

PNY 16GB SDHC MEMORY CARD:

Whether traveling or at home, nothing beats being able to download games from the Nintendo 3DS' eShop on the fly and having them there for the life of the console...unless you use up its 4GB of internal storage. Instead of fighting the uphill battle of determining which games to keep and which games get the boot, pick up PNY's roomy 16GB SDHC memory card and never worry about file size again.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

For frequent eShoppers and compulsive completionists, this 16GB card will be a digital safe for all your investments.

RAZER ORBWEAVER GAMING KEYPAD:

Going from a standard keyboard to Razer's quirky all-in-one solution comes with a learning curve. Once you get over that hill, however, the Orbweaver will completely change the way you play your favorite competitive games. Mapping macros has never been easier and by using the side thumbstick as an eight-directional shift key, the amount of achievable combinations is endless.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

If you're a serious *League of Legends* or *World of Warcraft* player, the Orbweaver is well worth its $129.99 price tag.

PDP AFTERGLOW PRISMATIC WIRELESS HEADSET:

By this point, you've seen a fair share of great products. What you haven't seen, though, is our pick for the craziest headset. We're constantly sent one set after another, each with a tweak or two, but no real improvement. PDP's Prismatic headset answers many of our major gripes with the competition and is one of the few truly universal headsets we've seen this year. Whoomp. There it is.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

If you're a multiplatform gamer with an eye for a great deal, this $99 headset is the best you're going to get.

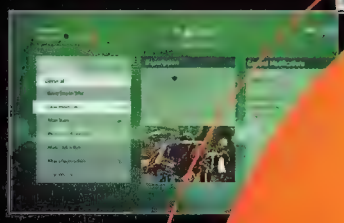
NYKO ZOOM FOR KINECT:

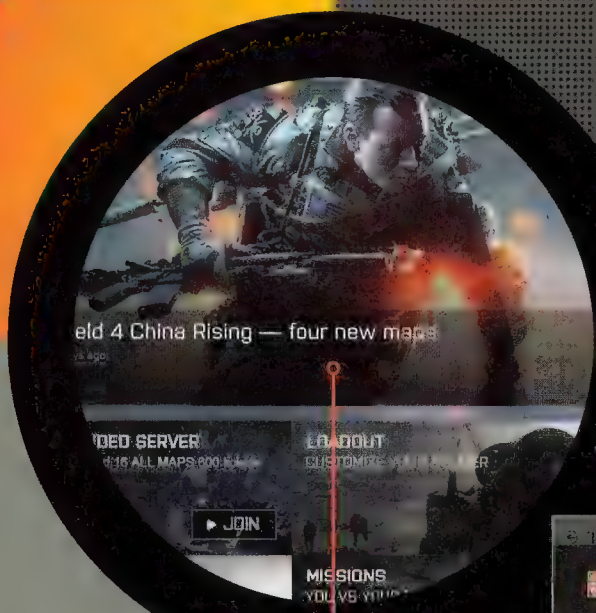
The Kinect completely revolutionized the way we looked at motion gaming. It took controllers out of our hands and made our bodies the only things we needed to play some of this generation's most active titles. There was a slight problem, however: The Kinect was great for huge home-owners, but for those of us living in smaller spaces, the Kinect's narrow scanner couldn't accurately recognize us.

HOW BADLY DO I NEED IT?

For apartment owners looking for entry into Microsoft's party-game scene, Nyko's Zoom will be a gateway drug.

FOR PARTY-THROWING APARTMENT OWNERS, NYKO'S ZOOM WILL BE A GATEWAY DRUG





SECOND SCREEN

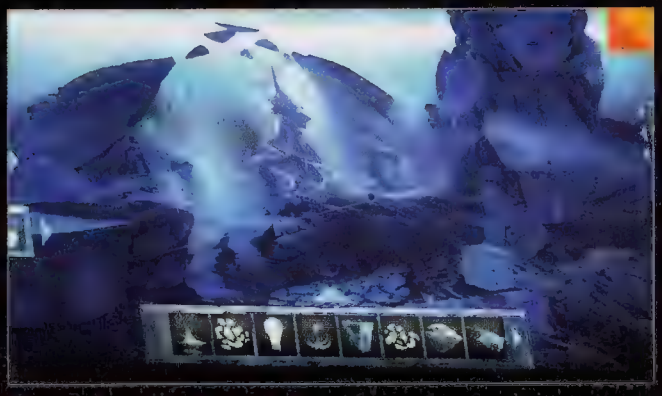
Keeping you in the game when you aren't in-game • Words: Timothy J. Seppala and @*GAMER* staff

Game developers are bent on finding work for your not-so-idle hands. Seemingly everyone has a smartphone or tablet, and even the most diligent among us have been guilty of putting a controller down to check Facebook, Twitter, or for a guide if we're stuck in a tricky area. More and more titles include features that enable you to do so while staying in the game. Here are just a few of the ways you'll be able to stay connected when you're not...uh, connected.

THE NEXT-GEN ROADMAP

Watch_Dogs

In Watch_Dogs' vision of the near-future, all of Chicago is a hacking target. It makes perfect sense, then, that you're using a tablet app to access all of the virtual city's sensitive information. Want to troll—or help—fellow players? Call in the cops for a little cat-and-mouse action where the feline is an in-game police chopper and the rodent is whoever's controlling Aiden Pearce. Even better, you can interact with all platforms (PS4, PS3, Xbox One, Xbox 360, Wii U, and PC) using the app and even leave messages for players on the Second City's billboards. Just keep it clean, okay?



Project Spark

Project Spark employs a feature called "remote rendering" to make your tablet, running Microsoft's SmartGlass app, just as powerful as Microsoft's next-gen console. This means you can play through the levels on your TV while your buddy creates or queues up the next community creation without losing any features from one platform to the other. Using a slate to create feels much more natural for level editing, too. You can tap directly on the option you want instead of clumsily wading through menus with a controller, creating terrain with a swipe of your finger.

Dead Rising 3

Buried amidst undead detritus, laughable outfits, and the absurd customization the series is known for lies *Dead Rising 3*'s secret weapon: a phone. Using SmartGlass, this handset becomes your window into the game's zombie apocalypse. But this isn't your standard Nokia: Not only can you navigate around backend menus using the phone, but you can also call in support (airstrikes and the like) and will even receive calls and missions from a character exclusively tied to the device. He'll even send you texts and unlock in-game stores for you. Cool, right?

Chris Early
Ubisoft, VP of Digital Publishing

Why is Ubisoft pushing so hard for second-screen apps?
We realized that games have been designed for that 8 p.m. to midnight timeframe. What we're doing with these companion games is allowing the fans of our franchises to continue the experiences throughout the day.

What guidance do developers get when planning these apps?
What developers get from our HQ is it saying, "Try to figure out a companion app and see if it makes sense for your game," and...then, they go and figure something out; that's why each app is really radically different from the others. The Watch_Dogs app was entirely designed by the developers.

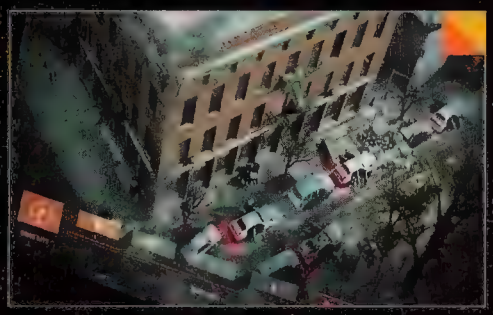
How do second-screen apps manage information overload?
The parallel use makes things more manageable and simpler, more intuitive. There's more to look at, but you're not flipping between different menu screens while you're trying to play the game.

Assassin's Creed IV

In *Assassin's Creed IV Black Flag* there's a literal ocean's worth of side content for you to explore. But have no fear, a free app is here to help stave off the possibility of choice-induced paralysis. Using your device, you can access the world map, set navigation waypoints, mark off shipwrecks, and even send your brotherhood of marauders off to claim trading points for your cause. All that means more upgrades for your ship, your crew, and your character. Just try to keep quiet with the pirate speak—we hear it's frowned upon on public transit.

The Crew

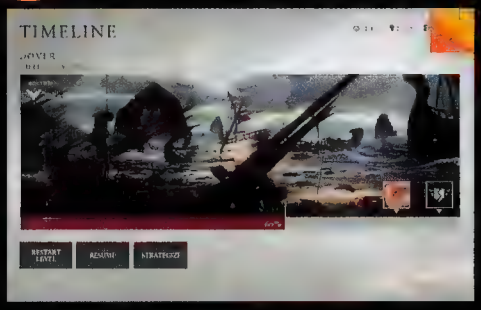
The Crew's companion app will be a gearhead's dream come true. Here you can manage your car's performance, paint, and appearance upgrades for whatever trip you plan on taking across the game's intrepid representation of North America.



The Division

In *The Division*'s companion app, you're taking an asymmetric support role. Healing players, powering up armor, and highlighting enemies—all in real time—while controlling an aerial drone with your fingertips is the name of the stunning game. And like in *Battlefield 4*, you can call in airstrikes—even while you're on the bus.

THE NEXT-GEN ROADMAP (CONT'D)



Ryse: Son of Rome

Ancient Rome ain't got nothin' on the modern world. *Ryse: Son of Rome*'s SmartGlass app lets you check for DLC, complete challenges, and then compare your achievements against your friends'. Try doing any of that in a coliseum. No friends? No problem! Just upload your gameplay clips via the Xbox One's Game DVR functionality.

Need for Speed Rivals

With the *Need for Speed* Network app, you can check where your friends are on the map in real time, compare stats, and monitor your progression toward completing unlockable skills. It will also recommend races, so you know *just* which track to tackle first when you get home.

Battlefield 4

Not even the local coffee shop is safe from the horrors of war, thanks to *Battlefield 4*'s Battlelog app. Whether you're connected via tablet, phone, or laptop, with Battlelog you can configure a loadout, check out what frenemies are doing, study stats, and even call in deadly Tomahawk missile strikes in Commander mode's triumphant return. You can also use your ancillary device as a map to monitor squad movements or set up attack points in real time. Beyond that, there are in-app meta-challenges to see which friend is the best at things such as headshots or kill assists—all with push-notification alerts if you're beat.

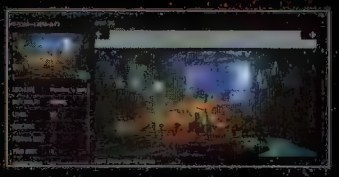
Where'd We Come From?

EA Sports Football Club

EA Sports' Football Club app let you manage your FIFA 13 squad on the go, right down to changing formations and optimizing the team's on-pitch chemistry.

Ghost Recon Network

Customize the perfect weapon of destruction without ever touching a controller using the *Ghost Recon* Network app. You can manage your squad and view stats here, too. Noticing a pattern?



Hitman International Contract Agency

View videos, check your stats and play-style info, and even manage asynchronous multiplayer missions within Square Enix's easy-to-use *Hitman* app.

Far Cry 3 Outpost

Check your loadouts, view custom maps and multiplayer stats, and even play a hacking minigame to unlock more goodies in the Outpost app for *Far Cry 3*.

IT'S YOUR CONSOLE...ONLY TINIER

PS4

Remote Play

With the PlayStation 4 and PS Vita, it looks like Sony has finally made its Remote Play features worth using. With the PS4 you'll be able to stream almost every console game directly to your handheld, and use its luxurious OLED screen for gaming while your flatscreen TV is otherwise occupied.

PS VITA

COURT MANDATE

Every PS4 game (except those using the PS Eye cam peripheral) is mandated to include Remote Play functionality.

PASS THE REMOTE!

Remote Play has been around in some form or another since the PSP days.

PS4

WE CAN BUILD IT, BETTER.

Sony built Remote Play into the hardware, meaning it should operate a lot smoother.

CROSSING THE STREAMS

Some games will allow cross-platform multiplayer between the PS Vita and PS4.

XBOX ONE

SmartGlass

Microsoft is putting a lot of effort into its tablet integration. Instead of using individual apps for each of its games, the Redmond-based company is leveraging everything its existing SmartGlass app can do for all its second-screen activities. Plus, it works with any mobile system, not just the tech giant's Windows 8 platform.

SMARTGLASS

NEED A TIP?

SmartGlass can deliver tips and tricks for a particular game if you're stuck.

DUAL SCREENS

Want to set up a multiplayer match without leaving your single-player game until everyone's ready? SmartGlass allows just that.

XBOX ONE

UPLOAD STUDIO

Though the feature hasn't been announced yet, you will likely be able edit gameplay clips in Upload Studio using SmartGlass.

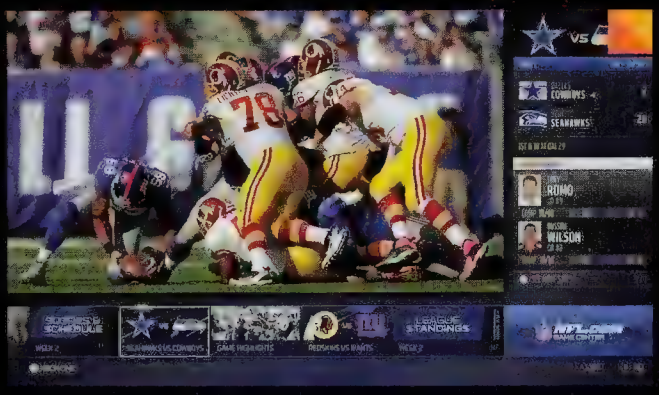
BRINGING BACK THE BRO-OP

With SmartGlass and Xbox One, local co-op is making a comeback in a whole new way.

MOVIES, TV, AND MUSIC ON THE SMALL SCREEN

Catch a Flick!

SmartGlass aims to enhance your movie-viewing experience on Xbox One by allowing you to navigate around the console without a controller and quickly search the web for things like IMDB listings, all while the film is still rolling on your TV. You can even use it to research showtimes and get tickets for flicks currently in your local multiplex. SmartGlass also enables you to browse cast and crew profiles, with some shows even offering interactive content , such as maps, time-synched storyboards, and exclusive behind-the-scenes clips.

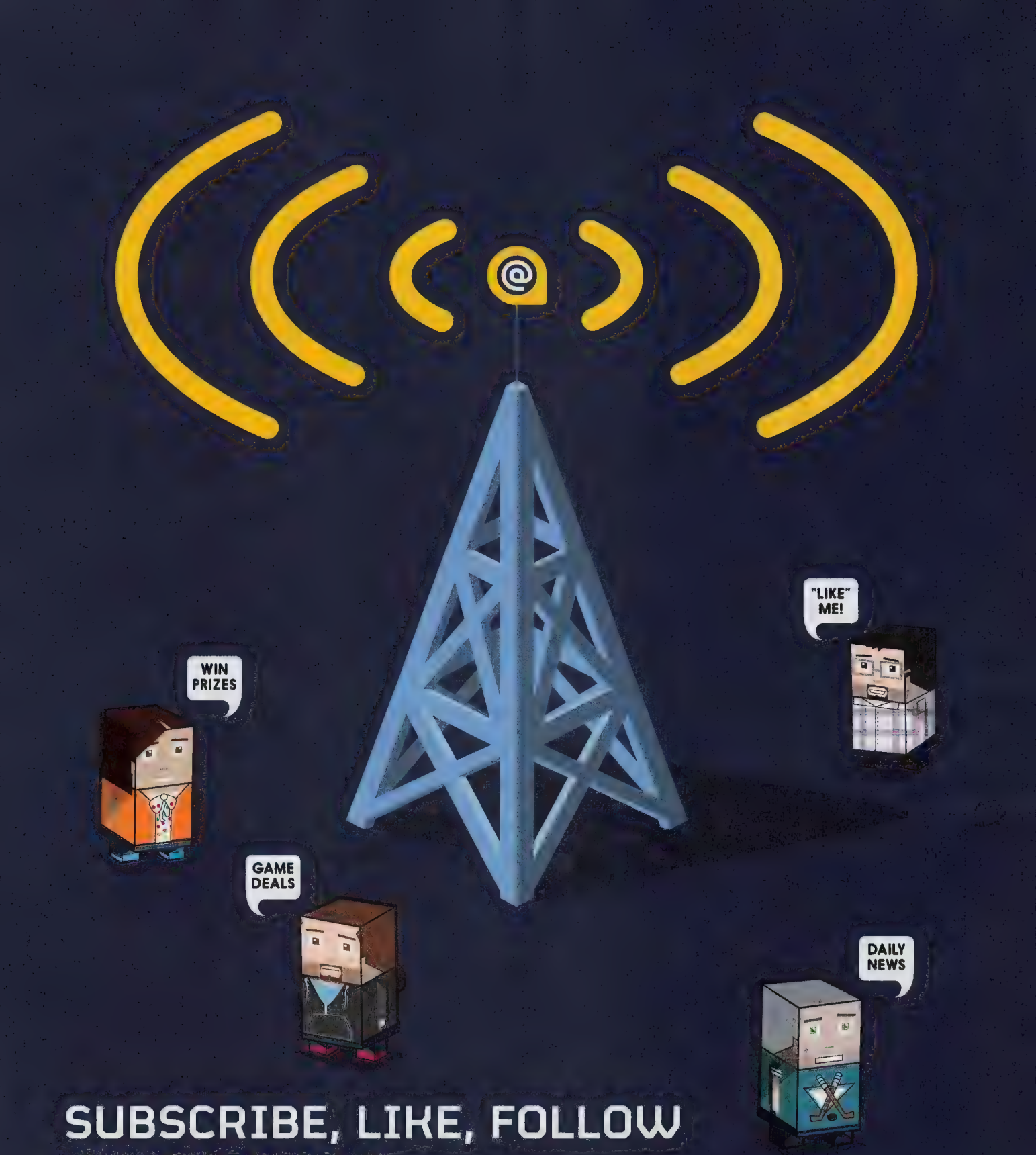


The NFL Rushes Xbox One

Microsoft's exclusive partnership with the NFL promises some cool stuff for gridiron fans. The company has hinted at instant alerts for your fantasy team and a ton of other options; it's safe to bet this will all be available via your SmartGlass device, too. Imagine you're watching the Detroit Lions get pummeled at Ford Field when, out of nowhere, Calvin Johnson breaks away and runs a 46-yard pass into the endzone? You'll get an instant update on your TV screen and can even see how he stacks up against your friends' and co-workers' fantasy picks. Want to get even closer to the bench? Manage your fantasy team from the couch via the native NFL.com mobile app available on Microsoft's Surface tablet.

Sony: Sharing is Caring

Sony's second-screen strategy is a bit different than Microsoft's. Rather than using the PlayStation Vita for ancillary info during movies, you can instead start watching something on the handheld's Netflix app and then turn your PS3 on when you get back to your HDTV and surround sound, picking up right where you left off. Furthermore, recent updates to how Sony handles content you've bought on its Video Unlimited platform means you can now purchase a flick on your PS3, PS4, or Vita and then watch it on any device that's tied to your account. This is a *lot* more convenient than how it used to be, with the video only being available for viewing on the gizmo you purchased it on.



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TOP PICKS

RATINGS BREAKDOWN:

@GAMER reviews only the best games in our Top Picks section. If you don't see it here, it's probably not worth getting.

- An average game. Just worthy enough to call to your attention.
- A good game with some flaws. Casual gamers will probably enjoy it.
- An excellent game that we strongly recommend.
- A near-perfect game experience.

68
LOST PLANET 3

Hey, meet the crew!

Let *@GAMER*'s own geek squad help you to know about the best-of-the-best games out now or coming soon.

This issue went to press before we had an opportunity to review *Grand Theft Auto V*, but you can find the review online at [illegible]

This month, we ask the gamer panel:

If *@GAMER* named a "Character of the Year," who should get it in 2013?

Charlie Barratt

I'm nominating Booker DeWitt + Zachary Hale Comstock. He's one of gaming's greatest villains, but more importantly, he's picking one of video game's greatest heroes

Matt Cabral

BioShock Infinite's Elizabeth. She stayed close while I took out Columbia's crazed denizens, but helped by creating tears and keeping Booker stocked up with health and ammo.

David Chapman

My vote goes to Isabelle from *Animal Crossing: New Leaf*. Sure, you might be the mayor of your village, but let's be honest. Isabelle is the one who makes things happen.

Nick Pino

Dante from *DMC Devil May Cry*. I loved the rebooted Dante and [illegible] but in their games, but Dante's a demon-hunting renegade with a heart of gold. What's not to love about him?

TOP PICKS

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NOT PICKS

The following games did not make the *@GAMER* cut:

Disney Planes (3DS, DS)
"Poor visuals and cramped controls mean the handheld versions of the Disney flick never even get off the tarmac."—*David Chapman*

RAYMAN LEGENDS

GAME OF THE MONTH

Legends never die, they just reappear at set checkpoints • Words: Heidi Kemps

It's hard to recall when triple-A game development focused primarily on cartoon-like platformers made for a broad audience. It's been well over a decade since that style was in vogue, yet Ubisoft has persisted with Rayman since the mid-'90s. He's never reached the iconic status of Sonic or Mario, but Ubisoft's love for him oozes forth throughout *Rayman Legends*, a gorgeous, challenging, 2D side-scrolling adventure.

Rayman, Globox, and adorable child axe-slinger Barbara are out to rescue Teensies and bash some monsters, with easy-to-grasp controls for running, jumping, gliding, and attacking. But *Rayman Legends* is no cakewalk: You'll immediately have to polish these skills, and while the game doesn't have "lives," hitting an enemy or falling into a pit will send you back to the last checkpoint to replay those difficult jumps and boss battles until you get them right.

Easily the best element of *Rayman Legends* is the level design. Each stage is distinct and memorable, both in terms of visuals and the gimmicks present. In one stage you'll dive off an inflatable island into a school of singing fish, while in the next you'll use magical trumpets to shrink and grow as you fight through a maze of half-eaten food. It's impossible not to smile at the joyous whimsy of a stage where monsters scream a rock anthem timed with your jumps and strikes. The staggering amount of collectibles provides plenty of impetus to revisit favorite levels.

It's hard to find much bad to say about *Rayman Legends*. Aside from a few frustrating levels and some oddly placed checkpoints, the worst I can say is that the game offers *too much* to do. Well, that and your jaw muscles will be sore from grinning the whole time.

A GORGEOUS, CHALLENGING, 2D SIDESCROLLING ADVENTURE

Rayman
He may be limbless, but he's ever-limber when things heat up.
Globox
A good choice when life requires a constant grin from you.

TOUCH FOR MAGIC \\

Rayman Legends began as a Wii U exclusive, with PS3 and Xbox 360 versions added later. How do they differ? In the Wii U version, you utilize the GamePad to control Murfy, the fairy companion, who can move platforms, clear passages, and stymie monsters; on PS3 and Xbox 360, he's reduced to a pre-set button press.

▲ There is no problem that a good, solid axe chop can't help to solve.

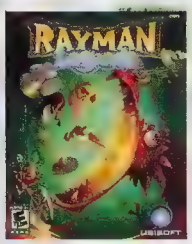
PAST AND PRESENTS \\

This is a big, big game—you'll constantly be unlocking and revisiting levels to collect things you missed. One of the coolest unlockables comes from the lucky tickets you can earn from collecting Lums in individual levels: 40 stages from Rayman Origins, redone for the sequel, each with its own set of collectable rewards.

▲ Actually, forget that—some problems you just have to run from...

▲ ...which makes the eventual smackdowns all the more satisfying.

GAME DETAILS



EVERYONE 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

RAYMAN LEGENDS

INFO
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montpellier
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
September 3, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 4-player local co-op (up to 5-player local co-op on Wii U)

GENRE
Platformer

SUITABLE FOR
Doodad-collecting enthusiasts

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Beautiful, colorful visuals
- ❤ Tons of variety in level design
- ❤ Loads of unlockables

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ So much to do that it can be overwhelming
- ✖ A few inconveniently placed checkpoints

CHARLIE SAYS:
Rayman Legends feels scientifically calibrated to hit your side-scrolling sweet spot. It's hard to put down.

OVERALL RATING:

4.75

LOST PLANET 3

Orange Crush
As with the previous entry's baddies, *Lost Planet 3*'s bugs are weakest where they glow.
Hazard Pay
Peyton packs quite the Akrid-annihilating arsenal for an average Joe trying to feed his family.

Back into the cold • Words: Matt Cabral

Lost Planet: Extreme Condition featured a story-driven campaign set on an arctic planet, but its sequel sadly dropped these elements for an uninspired focus on character customization and co-op. Thankfully, *Lost Planet 3*—a prequel to the first game—returns the franchise to its frozen, narrative-rich roots. While some flaws block it from being the series' best entry (that honor still belongs to the original), *LP3* successfully redirects the bug-blasting action back onto the right snow-blanketed path.

As relatable everyman Jim Peyton, you again find yourself on E.D.N. III, fighting the planet's harsh elements and arachnid-like aliens. Unlike most shooters' supersoldier heroes, however, Peyton's a working-class guy trying to provide for his family by mining the planet's rare resources. While seemingly small, this character tweak yields some significant gameplay and story elements.

For starters, it sees the series' mech-like Vital Suits replaced with Peyton's mining Utility Rig; equipped with tools—like a drill arm—rather than chainguns, it's more makeshift weapon than military-issued hardware. While battling from its cockpit's first-person perspective provides plenty of *Rock 'Em Sock 'Em Robots*–flavored fun, fans might miss the faster-paced Vital Suit–fueled action. Still, Peyton's personal attachment to his ride, as well as his ability to use it for everything from repairing machinery to rearranging aliens' faces, organically weaves its existence and use into the story.

When not piloting Peyton's sci-fi forklift, you'll brave the cold from behind a pretty standard arsenal. While the third-person action is serviceable, it's also the game's weakest element, courtesy of repetitive combat, recycled boss battles, and annoying backtracking. *LP3* is actually at its thumb-blistering best when encounters call upon both the Rig's powers and your weapon-wielding prowess; alternating between using the machine's metallic limbs to expose enemies' weak points and exiting the Rig to unload buckshot into said glowing targets is a blast. Unfortunately, such clever combat scenarios are few and far between.

Thanks to engaging characters and an absorbing sci-fi story—supported by some unexpected scares (see "Cold Fear" sidebar)—*LP3* unravels the series' best yarn yet. Its gameplay, however, while often inspired, relies too much on rote running and gunning. While not exactly the evolution I'd hoped for, this prequel still packs plenty of frigid fun for seasoned snow pirates and rookie Rig operators alike.

GAME DETAILS

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

LOST PLANET 3

INFO
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Spark Unlimited
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
August 27, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 10-player online

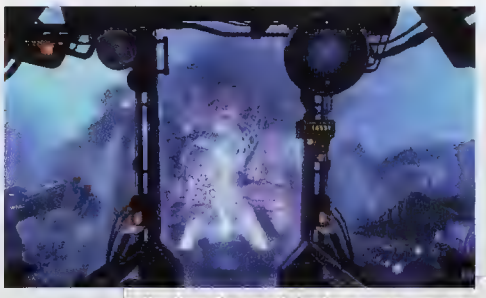
GENRE
Action

SUITABLE FOR
Fans of frostbite, insect aliens, working-class heroes

**GETTING FROSTY WITH FRIENDS ** While Lost Planet 3's online offerings generally riff on familiar faves, such as Team Deathmatch and Capture the Flag, the snowy terrain and grappling hook inject welcome variety. Additionally, the series' Vital Suits—noticeably absent from the campaign—occasionally pop up in online melees. Multiplayer's biggest draw, though, are hybrid modes, such as Akrid Survival, which sees two teams cooperatively fighting hordes of bugs before turning on each other.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVE \\

▲ With plenty of cover-based shooting, the third-person view aids your on-foot action.



▲ The cockpit view is cool during a storm or when lightning illuminates the background.

**COLD FEAR ** Borrowing a few pages from *Dead Space*'s playbook, *Lost Planet 3* is easily the series' scariest entry. It's by no means "survival horror" scary, but some abandoned, underground outposts—populated by face hugger–like foes—are as chilling as they are chilly.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Fun mix of Rig and on-foot combat
- ❤ Immersive, bone-chilling setting
- ❤ Good variations on multiplayer staples

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Gunplay can grow repetitive
- ✖ Backtracking and reused bosses feel like filler

NICK SAYS:
The *Pacific Rim*–style boss fights are exciting, but the shooting mechanics may leave you out in the cold.

OVERALL RATING:

3.75

THE WONDERFUL 101

If two's company and three's a crowd, what's 101? A mess • Words: Charlie Barratt

So, a schoolteacher, a cop, an Olympic gymnast, and a French middle-school student walk into a game. Have you heard this one before? Secretly, they're masked members of a global superhero squad that battles giant alien invaders by teaming up with almost a hundred other fighters and random citizens, then swarming—like a school of fish or an army of ants—into the shapes of swords, guns, whips, hammers, claws, and other weapons. Also, they eat a lot of ramen.

No joke. This is the ridiculously weird yet ridiculously fun premise of *The Wonderful 101*, a Wii U exclusive from the same developers as *Bayonetta* and *Viewtiful Joe*. Like those games, it's a mess of big, crazy ideas and bold, colorful visuals. Unlike those games, however, it's also a mess to play.

To begin with, *The Wonderful 101*'s terminology and mechanics are explained in such a confusing and haphazard way that you'll need at least a couple hours—probably much longer—to fully grasp what's going on and how everything works. Even when you know what to do, the frustrating GamePad controls get in the way, demanding that you draw the correct shape on your screen every time you want to switch weapons, but often misreading your attempt. Sadly, the game's most obstructive flaw is also its most creative concept: While controlling an army of tiny characters all at once *sounds* cool, in practice it's actually like controlling a single amorphous blob of a character that you can't see very well. Add in a cluttered HUD and *The Wonderful 101* will seriously test your patience.

But if you're like me, you'll keep plugging and button-mashing away to reach the game's intermittent moments of bizarre genius. Baseball boss battles? Aliens wearing berets and soliloquizing about lost love? Videogame characters who seem to realize they're starring in a videogame? It's almost enough to excuse the mess. Almost.

ASSEMBLE! \\

The Wonderful 101's characters are as colorful as their costumes. Sword-wielding cops with Sephiroth hair, cherubic children with pet names for their pistols, Transylvanian gymnasts obsessed with both whips and fashion... watching these diverse heroes interact is like watching a very eccentric, very Japanese version of *The Avengers*, and often more entertaining than the gameplay itself.

Tired of grimy, gritty games? This could be the dose of color you need.

▼ *The Wonderful 101* is full of fun, silly humor—like the name of this truck.

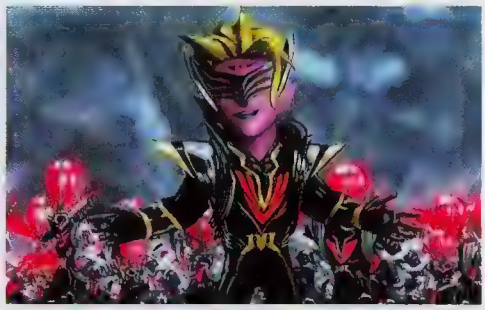
OUT OF CONTROL \\

I applaud any attempt at creatively integrating the Wii U's controls into a game—third party publishers certainly aren't trying—but the tricks in *101* just don't feel natural. Drawing weapon shapes can be hit or miss, clicking dots (seen here) to recruit nearby citizens is inexplicably clunky, and when the GamePad becomes a first-person camera for indoor sequences, prepare to get dizzy. Or nauseous.

▲ Gameplay isn't fully explained, but at least I know what Diedough-Goo's feet look like.

▲ The larger your group grows, the more powerful your combined weapon becomes.

▲ With a route this dangerous, Paperboy should really ask for a raise.



▲ The boss battles are inventive, but you'll face the same villains over and over.

GAME DETAILS

THE WONDERFUL 101

INFO
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Platinum Games
Platforms: Wii U

RELEASE DATE
September 15, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 5-player cooperative offline

GENRE
Action

SUITABLE FOR
Wii U owners willing to fight—both the enemies and the controls—for an original experience

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ One of the quirkiest, most colorful games I've ever played
- ❤ Constantly funny and surprising

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Extremely frustrating GamePad mechanics
- ✖ Difficult to decipher what's happening on screen a lot of the time

NICK SAYS:
One hundred heroes sounds great on paper, but maybe it would've worked better as *The Wonderful 1-on-1.*

OVERALL RATING:

3

PS3 XBOX 360

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FIFA 14

GAME DETAILS

INFO
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
September 24, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 22-player online, 4-player offline, both cooperative and competitive

GENRE
Sports

SUITABLE FOR
Digital despots and sport-minded card collectors

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Wonderfully realistic and smooth gameplay
- ❤ Two-player online co-op Seasons? No need to ever go outside again

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Skill Games get really frustrating
- ✖ Can be intimidating to newcomers

NICK SAYS:
Better balance means less frustration during matches. Not that I get frustrated...

OVERALL RATING:

4.75

@@@@@

FIFA 14

World domination Words: Richard Grisham

New ball protection controls will help you fend off pesky defenders.

The evolution of *FIFA* over this console generation from a decent football title to the most important sports game in the world has been fascinating. By rebuilding core gameplay, EA converted millions of former hardcore PES fans. All the while, the development team added several key modes that helped turn the franchise into a global phenomenon. *FIFA 14* feels like the culmination of that effort, featuring the best balance yet on the pitch and a multitude of ways for people to enjoy it.

Unlike years past, controlling the middle of the field feels vital. An adjustment to player momentum and weight along with improved defensive intelligence means you'll have much less success simply launching long through balls or madly sprinting down the wing. This forces you to play smarter, make crisper passes, and protect the ball until you pick your spots. New shooting mechanics reward proper placement, and the extension of First Touch to dribbles further cements the variability from moment to moment. Longtime players will need to relearn some basics, but it is well worth it.

THE BEST BALANCE YET ON THE PITCH

While there is plenty of fun to be had in the standard Career modes as a Manager or Player, the Seasons feature—persistent online tournaments that group you with players of similar skills—has been brilliantly expanded to include two-player co-op as well as Match Day events. *FIFA*'s commentary remains excellent, and the crowds sound fantastic as well.

While newcomers may still have a bit of trouble mastering the intricacies of the controls—and the Skill Games tutorials often serve to infuriate rather than teach—*FIFA 14* is a powerhouse of smooth, smart gameplay and accessibility to all types of sports fans.

THE ULTIMATE GOAL

Ultimate Team—the wildly popular online card-collecting fantasy team builder—has been modified to utilize Chemistry Styles. Sometimes just having the best-rated footballers won't equal success; you'll want to accumulate like-minded players with similar play styles then round them into form to achieve greatness.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2014

At its best where it counts • Words: Richard Grisham

In motion, *Pro Evolution Soccer 2014* is a thing of beauty. The fluid motions of footballers interacting with the ball and each other are stunning, and the microscopic difference between a goal-scoring kick and a shot high and wide of the mark is evident dozens of times per match. Even more, the amount of control you exert over the individual players as well as your team guarantees that—if you take the time to learn—your every wish will be granted on the pitch. Except, of course, for scoring goals. That remains the most beautifully elusive prize there is.

That's because *PES 14* demands much of its players, and is exactly what longtime fans want. Whether you're playing the legendary, multi-year Master League in charge of an entire club or the individual career of a young footballer searching for his place in the world, there is much to learn and little help available. Yes, there's a decent training mode to teach you key field-level tactics, but PES is a deep and rich experience that expects you to know some of what you're doing already.

While it's a shame that the sublime on-pitch play is somewhat dulled by an archaic menu system and ordinary presentation—in particular, the commentary is painfully behind the times—*PES 14* shines brightest in the most important places.

Players battle each other fiercely, often resulting in yellow cards.

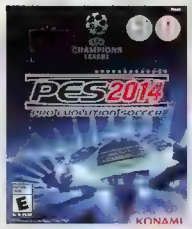
▲ Executing high-skill shots takes time and effort to learn, but the payoff is delicious.

A FANTASY WORLD \\

While there are some licensed clubs from around the world, there are still too few real sides or stadiums. Even as PES features all the top players you know, the majority of clubs use fictional names and others are non-existent.

PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS



EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2014

INFO
Publisher: Konami
Developer: PES Productions
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
September 24, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Co-op and competitive, offline and online

GENRE
Sports

SUITABLE FOR
Football-crazed fantasy lovers looking to create their own soccer universe

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Beautiful, fluid on-pitch experience
- Master League is its own addiction
- Intense two-player battles

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Too few real clubs and stadiums
- Archaic menus and bland commentary

CHARLIE SAYS:
I'll likely never score a goal in *PES 2014*, but that's how it should be. This is made for serious soccer fans.

OVERALL RATING:

4.25

PS3 XBOX 360

EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

NHL 14

GAME DETAILS

INFO
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
September 10, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 12-player versus/co-op online

GENRE
Sports

SUITABLE FOR
Zdeno Chara bully-types

NHL 14

Big hits and dropped gloves • Words: Richard Grisham

Hockey is brutal. If you've ever watched a Stanley Cup playoff game, you see the results of players sacrificing every inch of their bodies—wrenched noses, black eyes, and major gaps in teeth. The speed, skill, and terrifying physicality on display is unmatched in any other sport, and *NHL 14* captures these three pillars of the game better than any previous entry in the series. Even better, it manages to keep the controls simple for newcomers, yet deep enough to please long-time series vets.

PACKED WITH VARIETY AND DEPTH

While many will be displeased that *NHL*'s presentation and commentary remain virtually unchanged, the game's true beauty lies just underneath the surface. An updated skating engine coupled with brand-new collision physics let you unleash devastating checks on opponents if you have the right angle and speed. When you connect, the effects are addictively satisfying...but when you miss, there's a price to be paid as recovery is realistically cumbersome. The game also gives fighting a major upgrade, with it taking place in real time on the ice instead of in a minigame. Don't be surprised if you're tempted to drop the gloves a few times in each match.

Old-school fans will love the NHL '94 mode, which combines the rock 'em sock 'em imagery, speed, and simplicity of the iconic game with current-generation physics. Unfortunately, that mode is only playable offline, so you'll need to rustle up a buddy to bring back the good old days.

With deep career options, superb online co-op leagues, and scads of teams from around the world, *NHL 14* is packed with variety and depth. Time to lace 'em up!

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Big hits are addictive and realistic
- NHL '94 mode combines old and new beautifully

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Presentation and commentary have gotten pretty stale
- No online play for NHL '94 mode

ANDY SAYS:
It's awesome how much EA has improved the skating and player movement.

OVERALL RATING:
4.5

Gamer

Keep your head up! Jordan Eberle is about to get obliterated by Mark Giordano.

LIFE AND HOW TO LIVE IT

The Be A Pro career has added Live The Life, text-based interactions with teammates, the media, and others as you come up through the ranks. It's far from revolutionary, but does let you inject personality into your player. Make enough people angry and you'll even get booed on the road!

Familiar Masks
Your enemies are once again the stormtrooper-like, gas-mask-wearing, Cockney-voiced Helghast.

Deadly Diversity
The Helghast's numerous forms mean more variety when knifing them in the face.

KILLZONE MERCENARY

Get in, get out, get paid • Words: Mikel Reparaz

After the Vita's first two shooters turned out to be disappointments, you could be forgiven for thinking *Killzone Mercenary* is more of the same—but this, finally, is the real deal. Telling a side story that spans the events of the first two *Killzones*, *Mercenary* is a highly competent, highly polished effort that successfully shrinks *Killzone*'s action while adding some interesting twists of its own.

Stretching across nine lengthy missions, *Mercenary* begins as an explosive *Call of Duty* wannabe, but soon becomes something more nuanced and interesting, as its merc protagonist finds himself protecting a little boy and learning that his mission—and his enemies—aren't as clear-cut as they seem. Story aside, the biggest twist is *Mercenary*'s focus on money. Every kill or scavenged bit of intel carries a cash value, which can buy new weapons and armor, as well as such goodies as stealth-murdering remote drones and airstrikes. It's not as instantly gratifying as just grabbing dropped guns, but it makes picking equipment a more thoughtful process, and gives you a reason to replay levels with different sets of challenges for a fat cash bonus. You can also earn scratch in multiplayer, the centerpiece of which is Warzone, a stellar team mode that cycles out different objectives every few minutes. If you bought a Vita with shooters in mind, this is your first must-have.

SOLDIERS OF FORTUNE \\

▲ Melee and interrogations use satisfying, touch-screen-driven quicktime events.

▲ Being a merc, you may find yourself trading shots with "good guy" Vektans.

GAME DETAILS

MATURE 17+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

KILLZONE MERCENARY

INFO
Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Guerrilla Cambridge
Platforms: PS Vita

RELEASE DATE
September 10, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 8-player online

GENRE
First-person shooter

SUITABLE FOR
Anyone let down by previous attempts at Vita shooters

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Satisfyingly ultraviolent
- ❤ Offers a more complex look at the Helghast
- ❤ Possibly the single best-looking Vita game

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Easy to die while performing touch-screen-driven "interrogations"
- ✖ Its coolest toys are prohibitively expensive

NICK SAYS:
Thanks to *Mercenary*'s copious amount of cash, I had 99 problems—but a weapon wasn't one.

OVERALL RATING:

4.25

PUPPETEER

Help a boy to get a head in life • Words: Andy Eddy

EVERYONE 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GAME DETAILS

PUPPETEER

INFO
Publisher: SCEA
Developer: SCE Japan Studio
Platforms: PlayStation 3 (Move controller optional)

RELEASE DATE
September 10, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
2-player local co-op

GENRE
Platformer

SUITABLE FOR
Doll collectors of all ages, theater geeks

Kutaro, *Puppeteer*'s playable "hero," is like Pinocchio in reverse: He's a boy whose soul was taken and trapped in the body of a headless puppet. He spends the whole game—with the help of 104 different heads—seeking to reverse his fate, as well as that of all of the children the evil Moon Bear King has similarly enslaved.

It's a fantastic premise that's presented in the most fascinating way...like a stage show with seven acts (each of which has three "curtains" or levels), sets dropping in and out, and even audible audience reactions.

Kutaro's changeable head is also a creative gameplay mechanic: They're hidden throughout the game, and each has a secret benefit for you to realize (such as helping defeat a boss or triggering a bonus stage), though the fact you can only hold three at a time is a wonderful counterbalance that requires regular strategic decisions. The desire to find all of the heads and bonus stages infuses strong replayability.

While *Puppeteer* is a somewhat standard run-and-jump platformer in terms of its basic gameplay, its unique tools spice that up. Your head hunting is aided from the start by a second character controlled via the right analog stick (or that a second player can work with a DualShock or Move controller). In the first act, you also gain access to Calibrus, a magic pair of scissors that starts off as a weapon, but which evolves throughout the journey to give you fresh navigational and combat options.

Unfortunately, *Puppeteer* isn't without its slow spots and aggravating gameplay sections. But mostly it's a fun, inventive concept with a story that at various times is wild, humorous, and enthralling. If you're looking for a game that's unlike anything you've ever played, load this up and enjoy the show.

Kutaro works on a boss with his chain grapple.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Incredibly inventive presentation
- Witty script with rich voice acting
- $40 debut price

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Some frustrating gameplay segments
- Quick time events in boss battles

CHARLIE SAYS:
It takes time to get comfy, but once you're in, you're in for the whole ride.

OVERALL RATING:
4.5

Game

FROM DAD, WITH LOVE

Gavin Moore, the game's director, told me last spring that he was essentially making Puppeteer for his nine-year-old son. He was pleased his son was getting outside to play more, but sad it was at the expense of them playing together, like when his son was younger. He wanted to design a game where every scene was different—he noticed his son losing interest by the sameness of some recent games—but also create co-op they'd want to play together.

▼ Fans of sword-and-sandal films will love cinematic views of the slaughter.

TOTAL WAR: ROME II

A double-edged sword

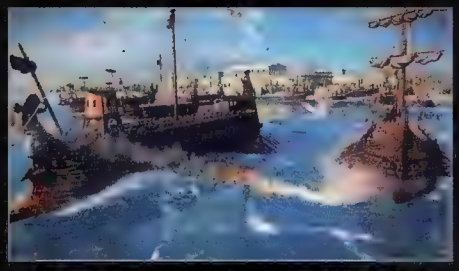
• Words: Matt Cabral

Where most strategy games offer turn-based empire building or real-time battling, Total War titles tackle both. With *Total War: Shogun 2*, developer Creative Assembly proved it could deftly handle this hybrid gameplay. *Rome II* evolves its predecessor's formula, delivering the franchise's deepest, yet most daunting entry to date.

Seasoned strategists and rookie rulers will easily grasp the RTS combat; despite many tactical layers, the tutorial gives players of all skill levels a solid starting point. Even those who trip on the steep learning curve will relish the epic action. Incorporating land and sea combat, complemented by tons of troops—all rendered in staggering detail—the massive melees make *Braveheart*'s battles look like schoolyard scuffles.

These cinematic slaughters can be enjoyed individually (see "Competing with Countrymen" sidebar), but those craving the complete experience will also want to dive into the brain-taxing campaign. Longtime fans will love the resource-managing tedium, but newcomers will likely be intimidated by the complexity.

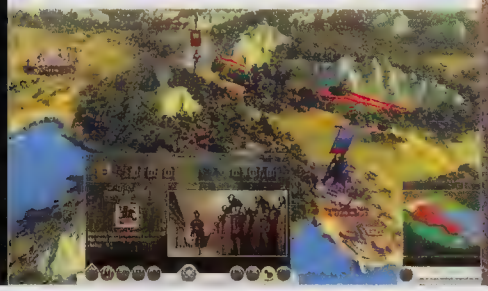
Mouse-and-keyboard conquerors won't be disappointed by this content-brimming strategy sim, but fresh-faced fans might find the experience more frustrating than an ill-fitting loin cloth.



▲ The enormous battles are at their best when unfolding on both land and sea.

COMPETING WITH COUNTRYMEN \\

The appeal of *Rome II*'s turn-based campaign might be lost on all but the most serious strategists, though its real-time combat is a bloody blast. Thankfully, fans of the latter can forgo the former by jumping online; a number of multiplayer modes are available, with the new Quick Match being the swiftest route to driving steel through enemy flesh.



PC

GAME DETAILS

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

TOTAL WAR: ROME II

INFO
Publisher: Sega
Developer: Creative Assembly
Platforms: PC

RELEASE DATE
September 3, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 8-player online

GENRE
Strategy

SUITABLE FOR
Fans of epic battles, resource management, brains-over-brawn gameplay

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Staggering amount of strategic depth
- ❤ Giant battles with thousands of units
- ❤ Raises bar for strategy-game visuals

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ Depth will be daunting to newcomers
- ✖ Waiting for bug fixes

NICK SAYS:
Strategy savants have waited a long time for *Total War: Rome II*. Luckily, the game doesn't disappoint.

OVERALL RATING:

4.25

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii U Wii PC 3DS

EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GAME DETAILS

DISNEY INFINITY

INFO
Publisher: Disney Interactive
Developer: Avalanche Software
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii U, Wii, PC, 3DS
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
August 18, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
4-player in Toy Box mode; 2-player in Play Sets

GENRE
Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR
Disney addicts with shelf space and deep wallets

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Potentially infinite diversion via Toy Box
- The Play Sets are a lot more fun than expected
- Very well-made figures

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- So...much...money
- Where are the classic Disney sets and toys?

NICK SAYS:
Disney Infinity is more fun than a barrel of monkeys... if you can afford it.

OVERALL RATING:
4

DISNEY INFINITY

To the bottom of your bank account...and beyond! • Words: Charlie Barratt

Check out the screenshot below. Seriously, how crazy fun does that look? Six different beloved franchises (*Toy Story*, *Dumbo*, *Tron*, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Phineas and Ferb*, *The Incredibles*) and at least three different game genres (shooting, flying, building) all existing simultaneously in a single moment. *Disney Infinity* makes this magic possible, and as the title suggests, also an infinite number of other moments like it.

Experiencing them, however, isn't as easy as it should be. With the game's Toy Box mode, you can throw together characters, vehicles, and settings from dozens of Disney universes, but you'll have to work—or pay—to access everything you want. The props available in the *Infinity* starter pack (current retail price: $75) are unlocked through a lottery wheel that depends on luck, as well as grinding for extra spins, while many of the best pieces are sold separately. Re-creating that awesome image would cost you at least an extra $70 to add Woody, Buzz, Phineas, and Dumbo to your collection. *Disney Infinity* is ridiculously expansive; it also has the potential to get ridiculously expensive.

For fans of these franchises, that's okay, because your money is buying more than just a new inventory item. Similar to the *Skylanders* series, *Disney Infinity* uses real-world toys that come to virtual life when scanned into the game, and every one of them looks fantastic—I spent almost as much time staring at the level of detail and personality on the physical figurines as I did playing with them onscreen. Each brings bonus gameplay with it, too, including fully realized and surprisingly solid five-hour themed adventures for the pricier Play Set packages. Despite the flaws, I'm hooked.

GATEWAY TOYS \\

The starter pack has three Play Sets: The Incredibles offers an open world with hover boards and helicopters; Pirates of the Caribbean is high-seas action with customizable pirate ships; and Monsters University, the most unique, has you pulling college pranks.

▲ The Toy Box is versatile enough that you can even build your own Disneyland park.

GamerXTRA
In *@GAMER*'s digital edition, you could watch video of *Disney Infinity*'s Toy Box mode in action here.

Though it's incredibly fun, *Diablo III*'s four-person local multiplayer mode can be...unruly.

@GAMER XTRA

In *@GAMER*'s digital edition, you could watch video of *Diablo III*'s 4-player local multiplayer here.

DIABLO III

Introduce PC's "clickiest" series to your console clique • Words: Nick Pino

For a game all about demons, *Diablo III* is kind of a miracle. Blizzard took one of the most unmistakably PC franchises in the history of the platform and ported it, warts and all, to consoles. Few series are crazy enough to make this transition, and even fewer feel as good as *Diablo* does.

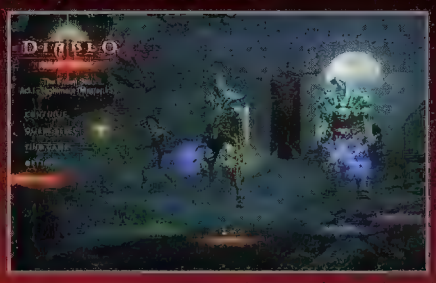
That's due largely to the game's easily translatable controls which, despite the obvious lack of a mouse, are tuned and tight. It's easy to feel lost without the PC's mouse-navigable interface, but once you get past a few odd design changes, you'll find the controller a more-than-serviceable alternative. Heck, having the new combat roll on the right analog stick makes dodging some boss' stage-based attacks even a little easier. My biggest gripes came from the AWOL Auction House, *Diablo III*'s source of real-world income, and lack of player-versus-player options—a blow lessened once you realize you no longer need to worry about a vulnerable Battle.net account.

I was disappointed to find that the console port didn't boast better graphics or in-game physics than its PC counterpart and even looked at times like a PS2-era game. Conversely, load times have been improved immensely and, though frequent, rarely took me out of the game for more than a few seconds.

Multiplayer options include offline single-player, system link, open-to-the-public multiplayer, and, my personal favorite, local multiplayer. Getting four of my friends together to play through *Diablo III*'s dungeons and diabolic boss fights made for some of my favorite gaming memories in recent years. Though it's rough around the edges, this loot-laden console port is an excellent option for those of us without a gaming rig.

CAMPFIRE STORIES \\

While the controls got a major facelift, *Diablo III*'s story did not. Cinematic cut-scenes and short, in-game vignettes help convey what's going on to the uninitiated, but if you're not a Blizzard loremaster, much of the plotline translates just as well as demonic gibberish. The bottom line? Diablo, the Lord of Terror, is back and only you can stop him.



PS3 XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

DIABLO III

INFO
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Developer: Blizzard Entertainment
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360
Reviewed on: Xbox 360

RELEASE DATE
September 3, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 4-player co-op online, offline, and system link

GENRE
Action-RPG

SUITABLE FOR
Console gamers dying to take down Diablo; controller-toting action-RPG enthusiasts

WHAT'S GREAT:
- The new controls work really, really well
- Four-person local multiplayer
- No "always-on" DRM to wrestle with

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Nowhere near as sharp as the PC version
- Story is still confusing

ANDY SAYS:
It's fun, but the gameplay is unbalanced—destroying you repeatedly in some levels, a cakewalk in others.

@GAMER OVERALL RATING:

3.75

Wii U

EVERYONE 10+ — E — 10+ — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER HD

GAME DETAILS

INFO
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Platforms: Wii U

RELEASE DATE
September 20, 2013 (digital), October 4, 2013 (stores)

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
In-game messaging with pictures

GENRE
Action-adventure

SUITABLE FOR
Heroes, scallywags, anyone who missed the original

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ Fun combat, lots to explore
- ❤ Many convenient new features
- ❤ Great story, especially the ending

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ It's not a huge improvement over the original

NICK SAYS:
The game is great, but don't even think of playing with a Pro Controller.

OVERALL RATING:

4.5

GAMER

▼ The open seas present plentiful opportunities for swashbuckling adventure.

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER HD

A legend becomes a bit more legendary • Words: Chris Hoffman

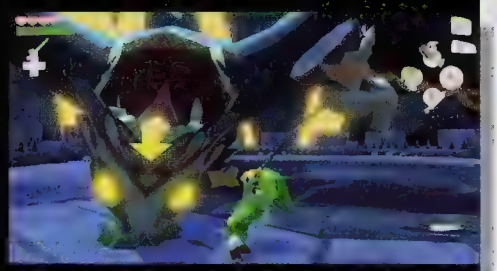
When *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker* was released on GameCube more than 10 years ago, it was unique, refreshing, controversial, and a heck of a lot of fun. This HD remake isn't nearly as groundbreaking, but it remains as whimsical and spirited as ever, allowing a new generation of players to set sail on a brilliantly designed adventure that's chock full of the action, exploration, puzzles, and items that are synonymous with every Zelda game. The world is vast and rife with secrets; the swordplay is arguably the most fluid in the entire Zelda series; the story is fantastic (especially if you've played *Ocarina of Time*); and the dramatic ending will leave you stunned.

The game benefits moderately from its HD makeover—textures are cleaner, lighting and draw distance are better, and everything looks sharper—but the new convenience features are even more noteworthy. Touch-screen item switching, faster sailing, dedicated buttons for certain items, and off-screen play are excellent additions. And though the game is one of the easiest Zelda titles, a new optional Hero mode increases the challenge considerably.

The Wind Waker HD isn't an essential purchase for anyone who's conquered the original, but this captivating quest is a must-have for everybody else, as well as a great jumping-on point for series newcomers.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

One of the new features is the Tingle Bottle, which you acquire from everybody's favorite freaky fairy wannabe early in the game. The item allows you to send messages and in-game snapshots to other players via an Internet connection. It serves a practical purpose, too: The pictures you find can help flesh out your virtual figurine collection.



▲ You'll need smart strategies to defeat bosses like this oversized foul fowl.

▲ The new GamePad touch-screen inventory is amazingly convenient.

FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN

The once-dead MMO pops a Phoenix Down • Words: Jack DeVries

Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn plays like a sampler platter of all the big MMOs. From the *Guild Wars*–inspired public events, to the *World of Warcraft*–esque dungeons, ARR has something for everyone, while amazingly still feeling like a *Final Fantasy* game.

The main story is actually one of the least interesting things about A Realm Reborn, but that's mostly because everything else in the game is so much more engaging. The game's side quests are full of humor, the public FATE events are exciting and addictive, and the sheer amount of classes and skills to learn is insane.

The lack of variety in early levels can be a bit boring (the hotbar for combat is pretty empty for the first 10 levels), but once the game opens up there are numerous gorgeous environments to explore, and inside each one are monsters and villains to destroy—from the seaport villages rife with pirates, to thick forests crawling with giant bugs, to creepy cultist temples.

There is always something to do, and ARR does a great job of sprinkling out side quests, while also providing the "Guildleve" system that allows you to accept quests wherever you are, whenever you feel like it.

On PC, ARR looks stunning, while its PS3 counterpart looks...pretty good. The console version runs surprisingly well (though it's definitely the inferior version). But if you want to play on PS3, this is one of the best console MMOs around. Just make sure to get a USB keyboard.

PS3 PC PS4

GAME DETAILS

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FINAL FANTASY XIV: A REALM REBORN

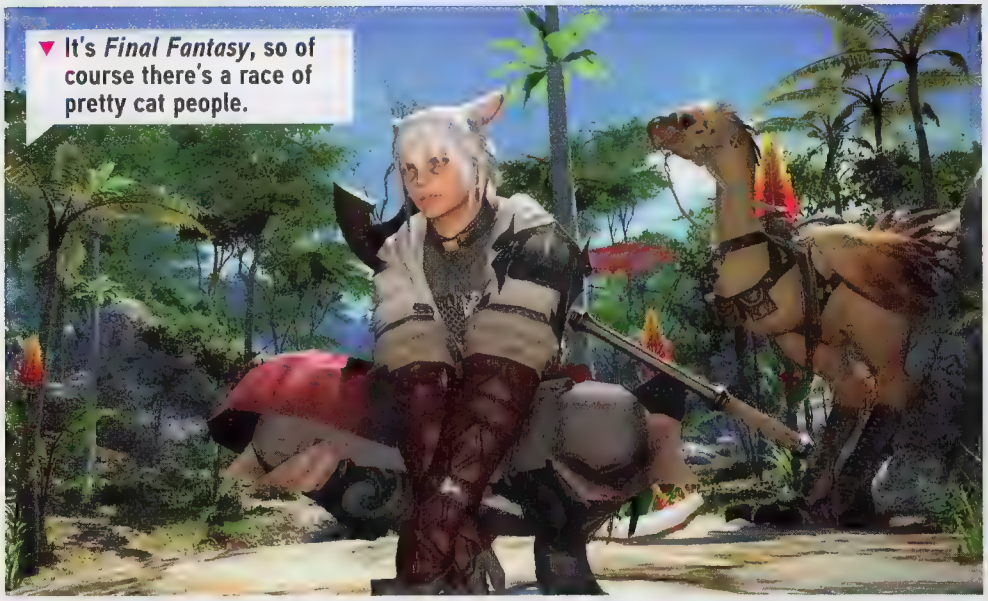
INFO
Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Platforms: PS3, PC (will also be on PS4)
Reviewed on: PS3, PC

RELEASE DATE
August 27, 2013

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Massively multiplayer

GENRE
MMORPG

SUITABLE FOR
Anyone with hundreds upon hundreds of hours to lose in a fantasy world



▼ It's *Final Fantasy*, so of course there's a race of pretty cat people.

▲ And gigantic swords...did we mention it has those?

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Multiple classes on one character
- Numerous ways to play
- Cross-platform support

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Starts off pretty slowly
- All crafting classes feel the same

CHARLIE SAYS:
It took an extra three years to get a good *Final Fantasy* MMO, but that's better than the eight it took *Star Wars*!

OVERALL RATING:

4.25

CLASS WARFARE \\

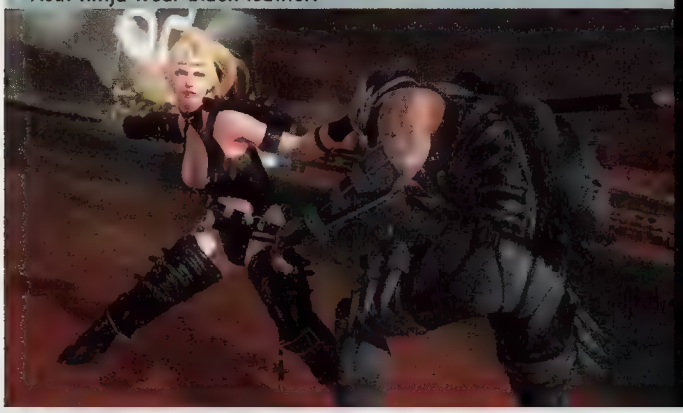
One of the coolest things about ARR is the class system, which allows you to switch on the fly. Want to be a warrior? Grab an axe. Fancy being a mage? Equip your wand. Each class levels up individually and unlocks additional classes, letting you try out everything with one character.

Mini Reviews:

Of course, size doesn't matter. These games are more than worth your attention.

I think this counts as resisting arrest.

Real ninja wear black leather.



DEAD OR ALIVE 5 ULTIMATE

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Publisher: Tecmo Koei • Developer: Team Ninja • Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360 • Words: David Chapman

DoA5 Ultimate is more than just a repackaging of last year's release. This new game features new fighters and stages, more customization, an expanded Team Fight mode for teams of up to seven fighters, and extra modes previously available only on *DoA5 Plus* on the PS Vita.

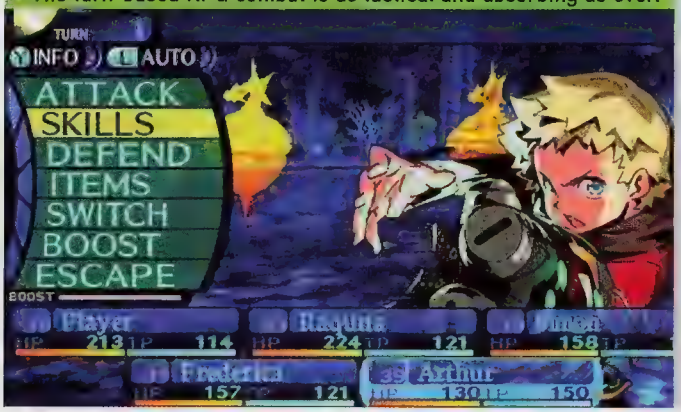
Dead or Alive 5 Ultimate still plays as fast and looks as good as the original. Expanded tutorials help newcomers get up to fighting form fast, and the new social options give pros a new way to brag. However, considering that online battles between the original and *Ultimate* are not compatible, fans who already picked up *DoA5* before might feel like they're being forced to buy the game a second time around.

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 2-player local or online
GENRE Fighting
RELEASE DATE
September 3, 2013
SUITABLE FOR
Fighters who missed the game the first time around

OVERALL RATING: 4

New story sequences give your spelunking greater purpose.

The turn-based RPG combat is as tactical and absorbing as ever.



ETRIAN ODYSSEY UNTOLD: THE MILLENNIUM GIRL

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Publisher: Atlus • Developer: Atlus • Platforms: 3DS • Words: Nathan Meunier

My, Etria, how you've changed! With an actual plot to follow, fully animated story sequences, and redesigned dungeons, *Etrian Odyssey Untold: The Millennium Girl* is a far cry from the series' DS debut. Thankfully, the new window dressing improves on the classic-minded dungeon crawling and map-making RPG action that first hooked me so long ago.

Battling dark denizens with the pre-made party in a lengthier story-driven jaunt is a fresh way to enjoy this revamped romp, though I appreciate the option to use a custom party as in the original. The game's cartographical leanings are still a blast, too, making this long-burning adventure worth revisiting.

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only
GENRE RPG
RELEASE DATE
October 1, 2013
SUITABLE FOR
Pen-and-paper dungeon-crawling nerdfolk

OVERALL RATING: 4

NEW SUPER LUIGI U

Publisher: Nintendo • Developer: Nintendo EAD Group No. 4 • Platforms: Wii U • Words: Dave Rudden

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

An intriguing new take on Nintendo's plain platformer, *New Super Luigi U* is a refreshing change, altering the pace (and face) of the series.

Made from the same assets as *Mario U*, this remix is a marked improvement. Each stage's time limit is a mere 100 seconds, with level design catered to quicker sprints (though hidden coins provide temptation for high-speed exploration). Luigi is also a better lead—his floatier jumps can be a godsend when correcting errant leaps.

My only qualm is that the game introduces an unbalanced damage-immune character who must be used in four-player co-op. As a whole, though, *Luigi U* has lots in common with the green-clad plumber: It's trimmer, faster, and more endearing.

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 4-player local
GENRE Platformer
RELEASE DATE
August 26, 2013 (eStore download already released)
SUITABLE FOR
Black sheep, challenge-seekers

OVERALL RATING: 4

When Star Coins are in plain sight, they're in harm's way.

The world map is the same, but the levels look much different.

DISNEY PLANES

Publisher: Disney Interactive • Developer: Behavior Interactive • Platforms: Wii U, Wii • Words: David Chapman

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Planes began as a direct-to-video spin-off of Disney/Pixar's *Cars* franchise. Bumped from business to first class with a full theatrical release, Disney Interactive raced to cash in on the film's added exposure with this adaptation. While the handheld versions never get off the runway, the Wii and Wii U versions have just enough power to fly.

Expanding on the movie, *Planes* puts you in the characters' cockpits. Missions have multiple objectives, but quickly feel repetitive. On the upside, fluid controls make flying a breeze, and drop-in/drop-out multiplayer lets friends get into the action. Wii U multiplayer gets an added boost by giving each player their own screen. Still, the bland visuals and repetitive play mean that *Planes* mainly serves as a short distraction for kids fresh from the cineplex.

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to 2-player local
GENRE Action
RELEASE DATE
August 6, 2013
SUITABLE FOR
Young'uns looking to fly the friendly skies

OVERALL RATING: 2.5

Luckily, all Disney Planes get regular de-icings.

"Permission to buzz the tower?"

Words: Ryan Scott

DOWNLOAD DIGEST

Interested in downloadable games? *@GAMER*'s dedicated review column covers new titles, episodes, and add-ons for console and PC.

Oh, boy!

Oh, boy, again! Except when you've died 17 times already.

CASTLE OF ILLUSION STARRING MICKEY MOUSE

EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Publisher: Sega • Developer: Sega Studios Australia • Price: $15 • Platforms: PSN/XBLA/PC (September 4, 2013)

Hot on Capcom's remake of the classic Disney-inspired '80s NES platformer *DuckTales* comes Sega's remake of the classic Disney-inspired '90s Genesis platformer *Castle of Illusion*. It's a fair comparison, as they have much in common: a similar HD-ification that brings beautiful visuals (in *Castle*'s case, 3D characters moving about mostly 2D environments); expanded narrative (with storybook-style panels depicting Minnie's abduction and Mickey's subsequent plight to rescue her); and lots of side-scrolling that preys on our nostalgia.

The big difference between *DuckTales Remastered* and *Castle of Illusion* is that Mickey's adventure is more frustrating, with very finicky controls and agonizing checkpoints right out of the gate. Granted, I don't have quite the same degree of nostalgia as I do for *DuckTales*, so maybe I'm judging it too harshly—but, boy, is this game tough. I suppose Mickey's remastered adventure is true to form in that respect, and it's definitely intended for folks who have fond memories of the original. Just be prepared for a challenge!

OVERALL RATING: 3.25

Yep...what it says on the tin. And this is a relatively tame shot.

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

CHARLIE MURDER

Publisher: Microsoft • Developer: Ska Studios • Price: $10 • Platforms: XBLA (August 14, 2013)

Hey, not every game is subtle. *Charlie Murder* is a big, loud, stupidly fun beat-em-up that revels—to a very excessive degree—in its own runaway absurdity. Yes, we live in a world where *Dragon's Crown* aims to compete for that particular brawler-genre distinction, but that game certainly doesn't feature an army of punk rockers laying gleeful, violent waste to apocalyptic hordes of demonic evildoers. It's good-looking, bloody, fun, and just plain ridiculous.

OVERALL RATING: 3.5

It's the Prince of Neon-Persia!

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FLASHBACK

Publisher: Ubisoft • Developer: VectorCell • Price: $10 • Platforms: XBLA/PC (August 21, 2013)

Flashback is what happens when *Prince of Persia* goes cyberpunk: This remake of the 1992 classic expands on the original's puzzle-platforming, painting a slightly stronger story for protagonist Conrad's *Total Recall*–ian adventure. A rudimentary skill system lets you buff Conrad's survivability and gun expertise, but, really, it's all still down to the platforming and the puzzles—and while *Flashback* is short, it delivers both pretty capably. As remakes go, this one's not too shabby.

OVERALL RATING: 3.5

GONE HOME

Publisher/Developer: The Fullbright Company • Price: $20 • Platforms: PC (August 15, 2013)

Gone Home is a difficult game to discuss in the context of a spoiler-free product review. It's one of those cases where the entire experience revolves around peeling back narrative layers until you discover just what the heck's really going on. It's a first-person adventure game, wherein you play a mid-'90s-era, 20-something young woman who's arrived to an empty home after a year abroad. Why the home is empty, and what transpired during that year...well, those are *Gone Home*'s big questions. The answers, as it turns out, are not what you suspect.

A lot of that owes to medium-induced preconceptions: In videogames, we expect unusual mysteries, plot twists, and sinister problems that we must set forth to solve. *Gone Home* subtly toys with those expectations to craft a fairly moving and down-to-earth tale that wouldn't quite come across the same way in another format. At its core, the mechanics are simple, the challenge is almost nil, and it's over inside of two hours. Is it what I expect when I think "videogame?" Maybe not. But am I glad I played it? Absolutely.

OVERALL RATING: 4.25

The '90s pop-culture references will make you grin.

This isn't as nefarious as other games would make you think.

It's kind of hard to capture this game's mood in a still screenshot.

BROTHERS: A TALE OF TWO SONS

Publisher: 505 Games Developer: Starbreeze Studios Price: $15 • Platforms: XBLA (August 7, 2013), PC (August 28, 2013), PSN (September 3, 2013)

Artsy, minimalist games such as *Limbo* and *Journey* have their detractors, but not all games need to be action-packed. *Brothers* tells the tale of two brothers who set out to collect the Water of Life, so that they may save their dying father. It's about family and teamwork (both of the narrative and the dual-analog kind), and it's a love letter to those who appreciate something different.

OVERALL RATING: 4.5

It does creepy, oppressive, vaguely retro-ish visuals darned well.

PAPERS, PLEASE

Publisher/Developer: Lucas Pope • Price: $10 • Platforms: PC (August 8, 2013)

Papers, Please is most peculiar, simulating the life of a border inspector who's responsible for vetting citizens and visitors inbound to a communist, faux-Kazakhstan nation. Check their papers; flag discrepancies; wave the legit folks through; hopefully make enough money to feed your family. The process gradually complicates itself, and I'd guess that the game does an okay job of simulating national oppression. It's stressful, for sure—which winds up being fun in its own strange way.

OVERALL RATING: 4.0

A-Z OF @GAMER RATINGS

GAME/PRODUCT	ISSUE #	SCORE OUT OF 5
A		
Adventure Time: Hey Ice King, Why'd You Steal Our Garbage?	26	3.75
Aliens: Colonial Marines	27	3.0
Animal Crossing: New Leaf	31	4.25
Army of Two The Devil's Cartel	29	2.5
Assassin's Creed III (Wii U)	26	4.5
B		
Batman: Arkham City –Armored Edition	26	4.75
The Bureau: XCOM Declassified	32	3.0
BioShock Infinite	28	5.0
Brain Age: Concentration Training	27	4.25
C		
Call of Duty: Black Ops II (Wii U)	26	4.25
Castlevania: Lords of Shadow– Mirror of Fate	28	4.5
Civilization V: Brave New World	32	4.0
The Croods: Prehistoric Party!	29	3.0
Company of Heroes 2	31	4.5
Crysis 3	27	4.0
D		
Darksiders II (Wii U)	26	4.5
Dead Island Riptide	29	3.75
Dead or Alive 5 Plus	29	4.0
Dead or Alive 5 Ultimate	33	4.0
Dead Space 3	27	3.75
Deadly Premonition: The Director's Cut	29	4.25
Deadpool	31	4.5
Defiance	29	4.0
Diablo III (consoles)	33	3.75
Disney Infinity	33	4.0
Disney Planes	33	2.5
DmC: Devil May Cry	27	4.75
Donkey Kong Country Returns 3D	30	3.75
Dragon's Crown	32	3.0
Dragon's Dogma: Dark Arisen	29	4.25
Dust 514	31	4.0
E		
Etrian Odyssey IV: Legends of the Titan	28	4.5
Etrian Odyssey Untold: The Millennium Girl	33	4.0
F		
FIFA 14	33	4.75
Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn	33	4.25
Fire Emblem: Awakening	27	4.5
Fist of the North Star: Ken's Rage 2	27	3.25
Funky Barn	26	3.0
Fuse	30	3.5
G		
Game & Wario	31	4.25
Game Party Champions	26	2.5
Gears of War: Judgment	28	4.5
God of War: Ascension	28	4.5
Grid 2	31	4.0
Guacamelee	29	4.5
H		
The Hip Hop Dance Experience	26	3.5
Hitman HD: Trilogy	27	4.0
I		
Injustice: Gods Among Us	29	4.25
K		
Killer is Dead	32	3.0
Killzone: Mercenary	33	4.25
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 Remix	32	4.5
L		
The Last of Us	31	5.0
The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD	33	4.5
LEGO Batman 2: DC Super Heroes (Wii U)	31	4.0
LEGO City Undercover	28	4.25
LEGO City Undercover: The Chase Begins	29	2.75
LEGO Legends of Chima: Laval's Journey	32	2.75
LEGO The Lord of the Rings	26	4.0
Lost Planet 3	33	3.75
Luigi's Mansion: Dark Moon	28	4.0
M		
Madden NFL 25	32	4.0
Mario & Luigi: Dream Team	32	4.0
Marvel Avengers: Battle for Earth (Wii U)	26	2.75
Mass Effect 3 (Wii U)	26	4.75
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance	27	4.5
Metal Gear Solid: The Legacy Collection	32	4.75
Metro: Last Light	30	4.5
Midway Arcade Origins	26	4.0
MLB 13 The Show	28	4.0
MLB 2K13	28	2.5
Monster Hunter 3 Ultimate	28	4.25
N		
Naruto Powerful Shippuden	27	4.0
Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm 3	27	3.5
NBA 2K13 (Wii U)	26	4.25
NCAA Football 14	31	4.25
Need for Speed Most Wanted U	28	4.75
New Super Luigi U	33	4.0
NHL 14	33	4.5
Ni no Kuni: Wrath of the White Witch	26	4.25
NIKE+ Kinect Training	26	4.25
Ninja Gaiden 3: Razor's Edge	29	3.5
Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2 Plus	28	3.0
O		
Omerta: City of Gangsters	27	4.5
P		
Pandora's Tower	29	3.5
Payday 2	32	3.5
Persona 4 Golden	26	4.5
Phineas and Ferb: Quest for Cool Stuff	32	3.0
Pikmin 3	32	4.5
Plants vs. Zombies 2	32	4.5
Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Gate to Infinity	29	2.75
Pro Evolution Soccer 2014	33	4.25
Project X Zone	31	3.75
Puppeteer	33	4.5
R		
Rayman Legends	33	4.75
Remember Me	30	3.75
Resident Evil: Revelations	30	4.0
Resident Evil 6 (PC)	29	4.0
S		
Saints Row IV	32	4.5
Scribblenauts Unlimited	26	4.5
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner: Soul Hackers	29	3.75
Shin Megami Tensei IV	32	4.25
SimCity	28	4.5
The Sims 3 Island Paradise	31	4.0
The Sims 3 University Life	28	4.5
Skylanders Giants (Wii U)	26	4.0
Sly Cooper: Thieves in Time	27	4.75
The Smurfs 2 (consoles)	32	3.0
The Smurfs 2 (DS)	32	2.5
Sniper: Ghost Warrior 2	29	3.0
Sniper Elite V2 (Wii U)	31	3.25
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed	26	4.0
Sonic & All-Stars Racing Transformed (3DS)	27	3.75
Soul Sacrifice	29	3.75
Splinter Cell Blacklist	32	4.25
StarCraft II: Heart of the Swarm	29	4.5
Star Trek: The Video Game	30	3.0
Super Monkey Ball Banana Splitz	26	3.5
T		
Tales of Xillia	32	3.5
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 14	28	4.0
Tomb Raider	27	4.5
Total War: Rome II	33	4.25
W		
The Walking Dead	26	4.5
The Walking Dead: Survival Instinct	29	2.5
The Wonderful 101	33	3.0
Y		
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved 2013	26	3.5

You might know **Joshua**.
He loves video games, and he owns enough to know they're not all meant for kids. That's why he reminds his friends (at least the ones that have kids) that they all have big black letters on the box to help parents find the ones that are best for their families.

You can learn about those ratings at **ESRB.org**

Los Angeles, CA

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ADULTS ONLY 18+ AO CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GEAR

90 Razer Blade 14" Gaming Laptop

92 Skullcandy PLYR 2 Wireless Gaming Headset

93 Sound Blaster EVO Zx Wireless Headset

94 PDP *Battlefield 4* Wired Controller

95 Mionix Naos 8200 Gaming Mouse

Photos: Samantha Berg

NICK SAYS:
Full disclosure: I've always been jealous of die-hard PC gamers. Not only do they get the most mileage from their games through community mods and maps, they get a "next-gen" system whenever they're ready to throw down the cash. Playing around with Razer's Blade laptop this issue didn't help my envy—it's really, really nice.

THE WORLD'S THINNEST GAMING LAPTOP

(Almost) worth every penny Words: Ryan Taljonick

BLADE 14" GAMING LAPTOP
Manufacturer: Razer
www.razerzone.com
Price: $1999.00

OVERALL SCORE: 4.25

FULL METAL JACKET
The all-aluminum chassis is super stylish and of great quality. Just be careful—heat will spread throughout.

CONNECTED
Things you'll love: three USB 3.0 ports, the HDMI Out connector, and HD webcam. Things you'll hate: not having an SD reader or an Ethernet port.

PAPER THIN
When folded, the 14" Razer Blade is a whopping 0.66" thick. That's thinner than the height of a dime.

A quick browse of the product description for Razer's 14" Blade gaming laptop reveals marketing claims such as: "impossibly thin," and "insanely powerful." Here's the thing, though: Both of those assertions are entirely accurate.

The 14" Blade undeniably packs the most power per square inch of any laptop I've used, and it's incredibly easy on the eyes to boot. Its black, all-aluminum chassis is as gorgeous as it is sturdy, and a few neon-green accents and finger-friendly backlit keys are the only visual indicators that it's a frighteningly quick gaming machine.

It weighs in at just over four pounds, making it a wonderfully portable laptop complemented by a compact power brick that's less than half the size of its competitors'. Even the battery life will impress, lasting around 4–5 hours during gaming sessions—a few hours more if you're simply browsing the web.

Most importantly, the gaming performance is phenomenal. I tested it with the likes of *Metro: Last Light*, *The Witcher 2*, *Final Fantasy XIV: A Realm Reborn*, and *Battlefield 3*. Rarely did I experience any loss of framerates, save for when I attempted to play any of these on maximum settings, and the 1600x900 resolution looked great on the 14" screen.

A few caveats: The TN panel screen has pretty horrific viewing angles, a bummer considering the price tag. Further, there is no hard-wired Ethernet port; the SSD, while fast, is fairly small in capacity; and the unit gets very hot while gaming—having it on your lap isn't really an option. But when portability and performance are all that matter, you'd be hard pressed to find a more suitable companion.

LIGHT IT UP
The backlit keys have adjustable levels of brightness, and the lighting can be disabled altogether if you prefer.

TRACK THIS
The accuracy and responsiveness of the trackpad was surprisingly mediocre.

SKULLCANDY PLYR 2 WIRELESS GAMING HEADSET
Manufacturer: Skullcandy
www.skullcandy.com
Price: $129.99

OVERALL SCORE: 3.5

ON MUTE
The PLYR 2's mic sounds pretty great, and automatically mutes when raised–a fantastic feature you'll come to love.

ROCKAWAY
The volume rocker feels a bit flimsy, but allows you to adjust game and voice volume separately.

FEATHERWEIGHT
Don't let the decent amount of padding and sturdy build quality fool you–this headset is surprisingly light.

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD

Not quite enough bang for the buck — Words: Ryan Taljonick

Going wireless is extremely convenient for obvious reasons, but when it comes to budget options, such as Skullycandy's PLYR 2, cutting the cords comes at the sacrifice of audio quality.

That's not to say the PLYR 2 sounds bad; it lacks clarity at higher volumes and its bass is a bit underwhelming, but the set will certainly do the job for gamers who don't consider themselves hardcore audiophiles. Just be warned: It doesn't support an optical connection, nor does it come packaged with the 3.5mm cable necessary to connect the wireless transceiver to your PC.

Its build quality is pretty sturdy, though I would've preferred a volume knob as opposed to the cheap-feeling rocker attached to the right earphone. The padding is adequate throughout, and the headset is extremely lightweight. It is quite snug, however, and became a bit uncomfortable after just an hour or two of use.

Two of the PLYR 2's most impressive features are its battery life and wireless signal distance. I got about seven hours of playtime out of a single charge, and was shocked that I could travel through my entire apartment without losing signal, a feat rarely accomplished by far more expensive headsets. As an all-in-one wireless solution that'll work on practically any console or device, the PLYR 2 will get the job done with a few caveats.

DECEIVINGLY CREATIVE

Creative's Sound Blaster EVO Zx brings the noise to PC and Mac

Words: Nick Pino

When it comes to great-sounding audio, looks can be deceiving. Such is the case with Creative Labs' latest foray into headphone territory, the EVO Zx. Packing a built-in Creative Labs soundcard, this set pumps out some of the highest-end audio I've ever heard. You haven't really listened to your favorite music until you've heard it through these. Thanks to innovations like the upgraded near-field communications chip and free "Sound Blaster Central" mobile app, taking the set wireless via Bluetooth was a breeze—and I was even able to save my pitch-perfect settings for future sessions.

Like the Sound Blaster Tactics3D Omega headset we reviewed in @GAMER #15, I found the cushy padding retained heat uncomfortably well. This made the EVO Zx a great stand-in for ear warmers, but a lousy solution for long-term gaming. And while the rest of the headset felt well-constructed (did you see those sweet 40mm drivers?), the headset bridge felt unforgivingly flimsy. Thankfully, though, the Zx's stellar noise-cancelling technology and beefy built-in soundcard more than made up for the set's shortcomings.

SOUND BLASTER EVO ZX WIRELESS HEADSET

Manufacturer: Creative Labs
www.creative.com
Price: $229.99

OVERALL SCORE: 4.25

EXTEND-SIVE
With its expandable bridge, this headset should fit all but the most miniscule of head shapes.

40MM TO FREEDOM
The Zx's 40mm drivers produce a beautiful sound and justify the set's lavish price point.

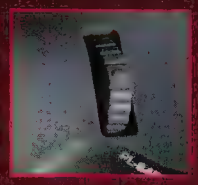
VOICE MAGIC
The VoiceFocus dual-mic array is the techno-magic behind the EVO Zx's boom attachment-free design.

BATTLEFIELD 4 WIRED CONTROLLER

Manufacturer: PDP
www.pdp.com
Price: $49.99

OVERALL SCORE: 4.25

MACRO MACHINE
The controller's macro buttons have three different programmable functions: up, down, and can even be clicked in.



LIGHT-HEARTED
Weighing less than its standard Xbox 360 counterpart, PDP's controller felt fantastic and sturdy.

MIGHTY MATTE
While some gamers may not like the non-glossy finish, I think the slick matte look makes for a better experience.

READY FOR BATTLE

Putting PDP's *Battlefield 4* controller under the *macro*-scope Words: Nick Pino

The controller you choose to use can make or break a good game. Sticky buttons and shoddy sticks can completely ruin your K/D spread in first-person shooters like *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*, while lackadaisical triggers and slippery-when-sweat finishes won't help a bit in racers such as *Forza 4*. PDP's latest line of PS3 and Xbox 360 controllers not only rights all of those aforementioned wrongs but—with the addition of two programmable macro buttons—does much more.

Built with shooters like *Battlefield 4* in mind, this controller combines the tactile appeal of slim, snappy triggers with the multi-functionality of a mouse's macro buttons to make something truly unique to consoles. While I didn't get a chance to test out the controller with the yet-unreleased BF4, I did have the console ports of *Diablo III* to play with. By setting the macro buttons to powerful spell combos, Diablo didn't stand a chance.

I'll admit, the necessary micro-USB cord was irritating and the divisive matte finish—something I really liked—was something other testers couldn't stand. If you're into shooters and don't mind shelling out an extra $10 for a wired controller, PDP's programmable pad is the king of the hill.

THE MOST COMFORTABLE WAY TO GAME

The Naos 8200 takes ergonomics to a whole new level · Words: Ryan Taljonick

In the quest to find the perfect gaming mouse, it's easy to lose sight of one very crucial thing: comfort. Mionix's Naos 8200 puts ergonomics in the spotlight, resulting in one of the most comfortable gaming mice I've ever used—and it doesn't sacrifice functionality in order to save you from carpal-tunnel syndrome.

The Naos 8200 features comfy supports for all five fingers, though this will take some acclimation if you're not used to ergonomic rests. The entire mouse is enveloped in a rubberized coating that will help reduce slippage during extended play, and every button feels sturdy to the press while offering a fantastic combination of resistance and feedback. I did, however, find the top-most side button to be a tad out of reach when using a palm grip—a minor, but disappointing, inconvenience.

Mionix's software is incredibly simple to use, offering a ton of customization options ranging from LED colors to lift distance to polling rate and more. But no matter how much you tweak the settings, you'll still run into a bit of positive acceleration, thanks to the device's sensor, which can be problematic when you need extreme precision. A perfect mouse? No. An outstanding (and comfortable!) one? Indeed.

These two buttons will allow you to change your DPI (the sensitivity of your mouse) on the fly.

You'd be surprised how much of a difference a good mousepad can make; luckily for you, Mionix makes pads, too.

NAOS 8200 GAMING MOUSE

Manufacturer: Mionix
www.mionix.net
Price: $69.99

OVERALL SCORE: 4.5

LIKE A GLOVE

The ergonomic design of the Naos 8200 may feel bulky at first, but it's extremely comfy once you get used to it.

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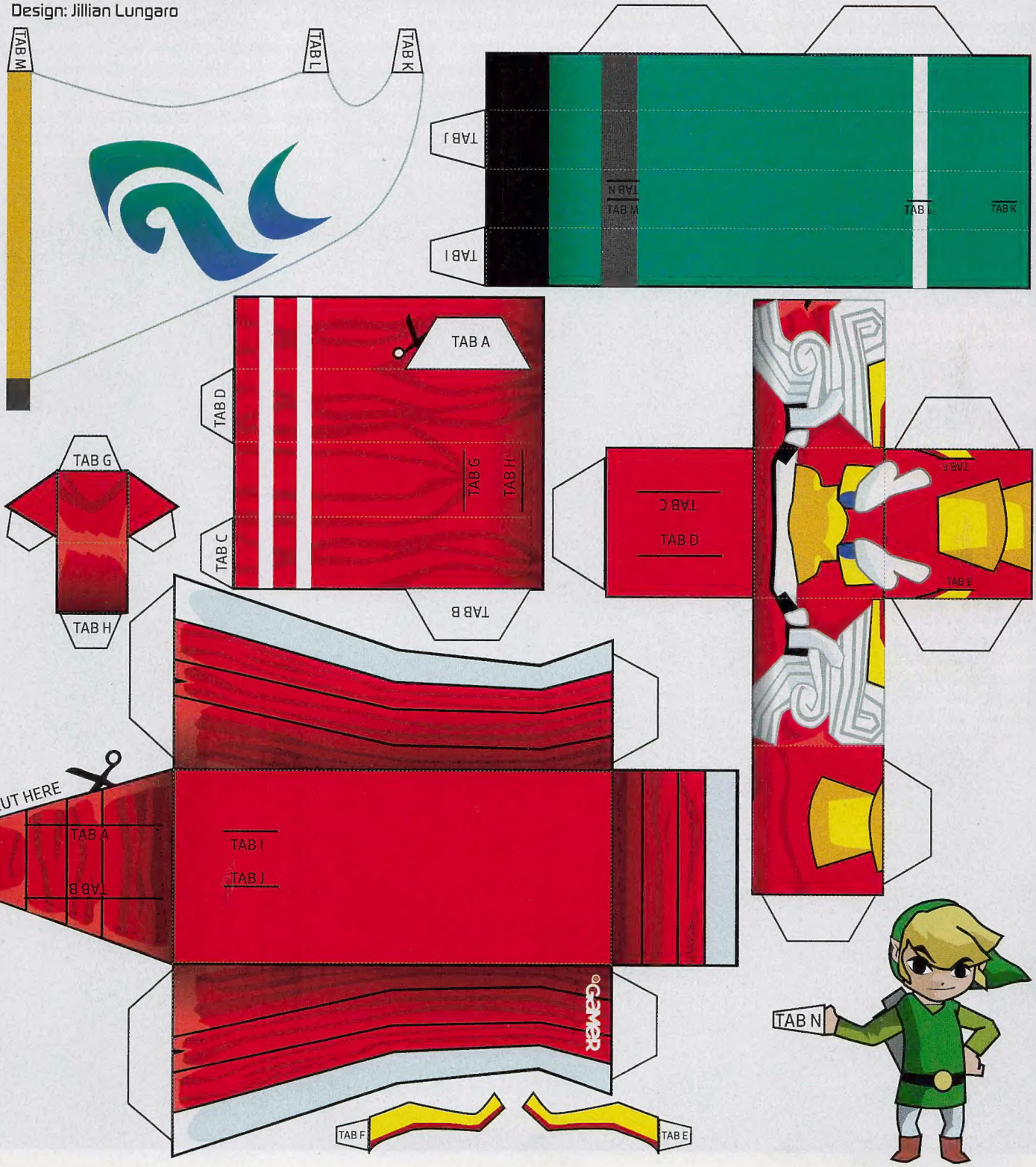

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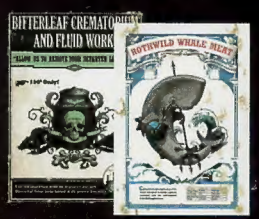

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